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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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I'M BACK: KEJRIWAL

Kejriwal gets interim bail till 1 June for campaigning; barred from visiting Delhi office

> Didn't I say I would be back soon? Here I am. I want to thank all of you. I want to thank the judges of Supreme Court, it is because of them that I am in front of you. We have to save the country from dictatorship
> -Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi CM

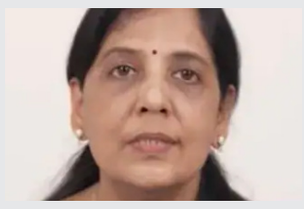
Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal addresses supporters outside Tihar Jail after Supreme Court granted him interim bail in a money laundering case, amid Lok Sabha elections, in New Delhi, on Friday **PHOTO: ANI**

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

In a big relief, embattled Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal walked out of Tihar Jail on Friday, hours after Supreme Court granted him interim bail till 1 June.

Kejriwal left from Tihar in his convoy. He was accompanied by his wife Sunita Kejriwal, his daughter Harshita and AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sandeep Pathak.

Supreme Court on Friday granted him interim bail in the money laundering case to enable him to hit the hustings in the middle of the Lok Sabha polls but barred him from visiting his office or the Delhi secretariat and signing official files unless absolutely necessary for obtaining the lieutenant governor's approval. Setting him free for 21 days to campaign for the remaining phases of the elections after 50 days of custody in the Delhi excise scam, the court said he shall surrender on 2 June.



> Hanuman ji ki jai. This is the victory of democracy. It is the result of the prayers and blessings of millions of people. Many thanks to everyone
> -Kejriwal's wife Sunita

The fourth phase of polling will be held on 13 May.

A wave of jubilation swept across the INDIA bloc parties as the news spread like wildfire, with his AAP terming it a "triumph of truth".

Kejriwal's release from jail, however transient, is expected to give a boost to the AAP's Lok Sabha campaign in Delhi where polling is scheduled for 25 May.

While imposing a string of bail conditions on Kejriwal, the apex court directed him to furnish bail bonds of Rs 50,000.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta rejected the argument of Enforcement Directorate (ED) counsel that enlarging Kejriwal on interim bail to campaign in the elections will be without a precedent.

The bench said Kejriwal has not been convicted yet, does not have any criminal antecedents and is "not a threat to the society". It noted that more importantly, the legality and validity of his arrest itself was under challenge before the top court which is yet to finally pronounce its verdict on it. Kejriwal will not make any comment with regard to his role in the case and will not interact with any of the witnesses or have access to any official files connected with the case, the bench directed.

"Between 650-700 million voters out of an electorate of about 970 million will cast their votes to elect the government of this country for the next five years. General Elections supply the vis viva (energy) to a democracy," it said, underlining the importance of the Lok Sabha elections. The bench said the ED has rightly pointed out that Kejriwal had failed to appear in spite of nine notices/summons, first of which was issued in October 2023. "This is a negative factor, but there are several other facets which we are required to take into consideration," it said, adding that Kejriwal is the chief minister and leader of one of the national parties. The bench noted the investigation in the case has remained pending since August 2022 and Kejriwal was arrested on 21 March this year. —*PTI*

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Mantri Mall shut down over unpaid taxes

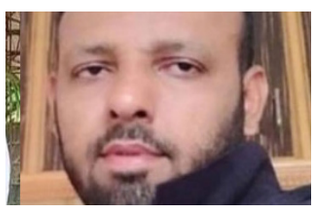
BENGALURU, 10 MAY

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) officials seized the popular Mantri Square Mall in Malleshwaram on Friday morning for reportedly not paying taxes. This is not the first time BBMP officials seized Mantri Mall, and earlier, the mall authorities had got a stay order from the court to resume operations. The mall authorities did not pay Rs. 50 crore of property tax, and the civic body slapped the establishments with seizure notices. A notice was put in front of the mall on Friday morning and the management was asked to halt the operations immediately. BBMP has in the past issued multiple notices to the mall authorities over non-payment of property taxes. However, Mantri Mall earlier managed to get a stay order from the court and continue its operations. It was shut between March and December last year by the BBMP but the operations began again.
—Salar News

Ravish docu 'While We Watched' wins Peabody Award

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

'While We Watched' directed by Vinay Shukla and Shaunak Sen's 'All That Breathes' have won Peabody Award in documentary category, the awards body said on Thursday. This is the second consecutive year Indian filmmakers have bagged the Peabody award. Rintu Thomas and Sushmit Ghosh's Writing With Fire won the award in 2023, making them the first Indian filmmakers to win this recognition. Sen's 'All That Breathes' film, which was nominated for Oscar awards in 2023, is about two Muslim brothers who have dedicated their life to take care of black kites. The film has won more than 17 international awards, including the top documentary award at Cannes Film Festival. 'While We Watched' by Shukla chronicles former NDTV anchor and journalist Ravish Kumar as he fights a shrinking newsroom against the backdrop of an increasingly authoritarian government in the country.
—Agencies



Praveen Nettaru and accused Mustafa Paichar **PHOTO: SALAR**

NIA nabs key accused in Nettaru murder case

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday nabbed a key absconder who was affiliated with the banned Popular Front of India (PFI), along with his harbourer, for the gruesome murder of BJP activist Praveen Nettaru in Karnataka in July 2022, according to an official statement.

Nettaru, a BJP Yuva Morcha district executive committee member, was hacked to death by two motorcycle-borne assailants in Bellare village of Dakshina Kannada district by allegedly PFI cadres.

Mustafa Paichar, who carried a reward of Rs 7 lakh and had non-bailable warrants against him, is the second absconding accused to be arrested in the case, said the statement issued by the NIA.

NIA had taken over the investigation on 4 August, 2022 and in January 2023, filed a chargesheet against 21 accused, eight of whom had absconded after the crime.

The anti-terror agency had launched a manhunt for the absconders, and on Friday managed to trace Paichar to Anemahal village in Hassan District, Karnataka, it said.

"Paichar was arrested along with Mansoor Pasha, who had harboured him," NIA said.

NIA investigation has revealed that Paichar, a resident of Sullia, was the secretary of PFI Puttur district service team.

"He was involved in imparting arms training to PFI cadres in the Freedom community hall in the area to prepare them for commission of terrorist attacks," it said.

Along with other accused, he was part of a larger conspiracy to target and kill Hindu leaders, the NIA said.

He had, in fact, formed a hit service team of PFI cadres for the purpose, it added.

"It was on his instructions that the hit service team had hacked Praveen Nettaru to death with sharp weapons in a public place," the NIA said.

The attack was aimed at striking terror among a section of people in the society, NIA investigations have shown, it said.

—*PTI*

RELIEF FOR RIGHT-WINGER

11 years after Dhabolkar's murder, 2 get lifer & 3 freed

PUNE, 10 MAY

Nearly 11 years after rationalist Dr Narendra Dabholkar was shot dead in Pune, a special court on Friday convicted his two assailants and sentenced them to life imprisonment. It also acquitted three others, including alleged key conspirator Virendrasinh Tawde, for want of evidence.

Reading out the order in a packed courtroom, Additional Sessions Judge (Special Court) PP Jadhav, presiding over UAPA cases, said the prosecution had proved the charges of murder and conspiracy against shooters Sachin Andure and Sharad Kalaskar.

The court sentenced them to life imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs 5 lakh each. The court acquitted three accused, ENT surgeon Tawde, Sanjeev Punalekar and Vikram Bhave, for want of evidence.

Narendra Dabholkar **PHOTO: PTI**

Dabholkar, 67, an anti-superstition crusader, was shot dead by two motorcycle-borne men while he was on a morning walk on Omkareshwar Bridge in Pune on 20 August, 2013.

The judge said though Tawde was charged as the conspirator in the case and there was ample scope for doubt against him, the prosecution had failed to convert the suspicion into evidence. CBI took over the probe in 2014 following a Bombay High Court order and arrested Tawde linked to the Hindu Right-wing organisation Sanatan Sanstha, in June 2016. Tawde was one of the masterminds of the murder. Sanatan Sanstha, to which Tawde and some of the other accused were linked, was opposed to the work carried out by Dabholkar's organisation for eradication of superstition, Maharashtra. —*PTI*

Devaraje Gowda booked for molestation

BENGALURU, 10 MAY

A case of sexual harassment has been registered against BJP leader G Devaraje Gowda from Hassan, who had written to BJP leadership before it formed an alliance with JD(S), flagging Prajwal Revanna's alleged sexual abuse of several women, police said on Friday.

Gowda was detained near Chitradurga by Hassan police.

The FIR was registered against Devaraje, who is an advocate, on 1 April but it has come to light only recently after his whistleblowing in the Prajwal case. Devaraje was the one who had alerted BJP leadership last year about Prajwal's alleged sexual abuse of several women, and cautioned the saffron party not to give a Lok Sabha ticket to the JD(S) MP from Hassan. Devaraje, who contested the 2023 Assembly election against Prajwal's father and Holenarasipura MLA HD Revanna -- also accused in a case of molestation and another for abduction -- had blamed Congress leadership in Karnataka for leaking the sexual abuse videos. —*PTI*

Devaraje Gowda **PHOTO: PTI**

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PHOTO: PTI

SECURITY FORCES KILL 12 NAXALITES IN CHHATTISGARH

BIJAPUR, 10 MAY

At least 12 Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Friday, Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said.

The gunfight took place in the forest near Pidia village under Gangaloor police station limits when a team of security personnel was out on an anti-Naxal operation, police had said earlier.

"The exchange of fire in Gangaloor area has ended. Our security forces have achieved a major success as the bodies of 12 Naxalites have been recovered so far," the chief minister told reporters.

He congratulated the security forces and senior officials for the operation. This is the third major blow to the Naxalites in Chhattisgarh in the last one month. On 16 April, at least 29 Naxalites were killed in an encounter in Kanker district, while ten Naxalites were killed in another encounter with the security forces along the border of Narayanpur and Kanker districts on 30 April. —*PTI*

AFTER MARRIAGE IS PUT OFF

Fiance chops off girl's head in Kodagu

MADIKERI, 10 MAY

A 16-year-old girl was killed in Kodagu allegedly by her fiance who chopped off her head and took it along with him after their proposed marriage was put off as she was a minor, police said on Friday. The 32-year-old accused, Prakash, fled from Surlabbi village in Somwarpet taluk and is yet to be arrested, they said.

The girl, Meena, is the only SSLC student of a government school in the village to clear the exam whose results were announced on Thursday. Meena's engagement was fixed with Prakash on Thursday, according to police. However, someone informed the Child Helpline number and officials from Child Welfare Department reached Meena's house and counselled both families saying if they went ahead with the marriage, it would attract provisions of Pocso and Child Marriage Acts.

Prakash and Meena

PHOTO: SALAR

Both families then agreed that only after Meena attained the age of 18 she would be married to Prakash. The officials and the groom's family then left the place. However, at 5.30pm on Thursday, Prakash barged into Meena's house, kicked her father and assaulted her mother with a sharp-edged weapon. He then dragged the girl outside for about 100 metres, chopped off her head and fled the scene with it, Superintendent of Police (Kodagu), Ramarajan K, said.

The victim's father and mother were admitted to a hospital where the woman was treated for her injuries. Her father did not receive any visible cut injuries, he said. "All efforts are being taken to nab the accused," he added. A case has been registered against the accused under Sections 307 (attempt to murder) and 302 (murder) of Indian Penal Code and sections of Protection of Children against Sexual Offences Act, police said. The victim has three sisters and two brothers and she was the youngest, police added.

—*Salar News/PTI*

WFI case: Brij charged for sexual harassment

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

The Rouse Avenue Court on Friday ordered the 'framing of charges' on sexual harassment allegations levelled by several women wrestlers against former WFI Chief and BJP leader Brij Bhushan Singh and one other accused.

The Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Priyanka Rajpoot while passing the order said there is sufficient material against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh to proceed with the sexual harassment of five women wrestlers and with the offence of outraging the modesty of women.

The court found sufficient material to proceed against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh under sections 354 and 354 A (IPC). Charges have also been framed against him under section 506 (part 1) on the allegations of two women. However, the court discharged Brij Bhushan from the allegations made by the sixth wrestler, said the court. The court also framed charges against the second accused Vinod Tomar under section 506 (part 1) of the IPC on the allegation of one woman and discharged him with the rest allegations made against him. The court has now listed the matter for official framing of charges on 21 May. The same court had dismissed an application moved by Brij, seeking further investigation and placing of a Call Detail Record of a coach.

—*PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

PHOTO: PTI

Youth killed in Kalaburagi for campaigning

KALABURAGI, 10 MAY

A group of assailants allegedly killed a 27-year-old man at Sangapur village of Afzalpur taluk in the district accusing him of campaigning for Congress party in elections. Javeed Chinnamalli was murdered on Thursday night and his body was found in a nearby well. Chinnamalli's murder is not an isolated incident in Kalaburagi. In Ashok Nagar layout, an individual named Ashok fell victim to violence during Ambedkar Jayanti celebrations. Moreover, the political landscape in Kalaburagi is marred by a string of targeted assassinations. The murder of BJP MP Umesh Jadhav's close associate, Girish Chakra, serves as a chilling example of the lengths to which perpetrators are willing to go to silence dissenting voices. Similarly, Ravikumar, 45, was stoned, and set ablaze in the outskirts of Aland town. *—Salar News*

Bore Bank Road to be closed for a month

BENGALURU, 10 MAY

Bore Bank Road will remain shut for traffic after a portion of the road near the under-construction Metro site near Pottery Town caved in causing a 5m deep crater after heavy rains on Wednesday.Although the Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) has already started fixing the road, officials stated that it will take at least 30 days to allow traffic movement back on Bore Bank Road. This will inconvenience residents of Benson Town, Nandidurga Road and JC Nagar who use the route frequently. According to BMRCL, the rainfall also broke the temporary pile arrangements created to support the soil excavation for the under-construction Pottery Town metro station on the Pink Line. This road links Benson Town with Tannery Road. "The traffic is diverted and the road will remain closed till the time the restoration is done. No persons are injured," it said.The traffic police department said the vehicular movement will be restricted for 15-30 days and commuters who were earlier using Bore Bank Road to reach Benson Town and Nandi Durga Road will have to use Haines Road. BMRCL officials said that they are building a temporary road using the space available inside the metro work site to help pedestrians and two-wheelers reach Nandidurga Road, Benson Town, and surrounding areas. The construction of the temporary road is expected to be completed in the next 10 days. *—Salar News*

ISRO's '3D-printed' rocket engine saves 97% raw materials

BENGALURU, 10 MAY

ISRO successfully conducted a long-duration test of its PS4 engine, re-designed for production using cutting-edge additive manufacturing techniques -- also known in common parlance as 3D printing -- and crafted in Indian industry, the space agency said on Friday.

The new engine, now a single piece, saves 97 per cent of raw materials and reduces production time by 60 per cent, ISRO said.

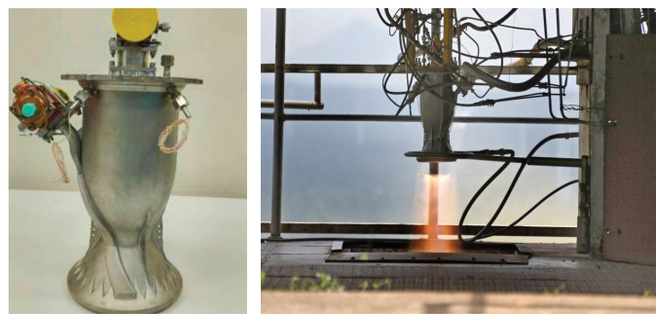
ISRO achieved the major milestone with the successful hot testing of a liquid rocket engine manufactured through AM technology for a duration of 665 seconds on May 9, a release from the space agency said.

The engine used is the PS4 engine of PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle) upper stage.

The PS4 engine manufactured in the conventional machining and welding route has been in use for the fourth stage of PSLV which has a thrust of 7.33 kN in vacuum condition. The same engine is also used in the Reaction Control System (RCS) of the first stage (PS1) of PSLV, the release said.The engine uses the earth-storable bipropellant combinations of Nitrogen Tetroxide as oxidiser and Mono Methyl Hydrazine as fuel in pressure-fed mode. It was developed by ISRO's Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC).LPSC redesigned the engine making it amenable to the Design for Additive Manufacturing (DfAM) concept thereby gaining considerable advantages.

The Laser Powder Bed Fusion technique employed has brought down the number of parts from 14 to a single-piece, and eliminated 19 weld joints, saving significantly on the raw material usage per engine (13.7 kg of metal powder compared to the 565 kg of forgings and sheets for conventional manufacturing process) and reduced 60 per cent in the overall production time, the ISRO release said.The manufacturing of the engine was done in Indian industry (M/s WIPRO 3D), and the engine was hot tested at Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu.

—PTI



ISRO successfully conducts a long-duration test of the PS4 engine, re-designed for production using cutting-edge additive manufacturing techniques and crafted in the Indian industry **PHOTO: X@isro**

Leaky roof in Terminal 2 leads to 13 flight diversions

Visuals showed water pouring near baggage conveyor belt

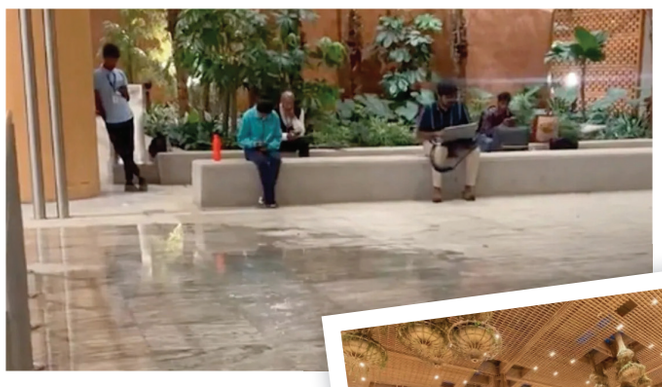
BENGALURU, 10 MAY

Heavy overnight rain disrupted flight services in Bengaluru between 9.35pm and 10.29pm, officials at the Kempegowda International Airport said on Friday.

Disruptions took place due to water leakage inside the airport Terminal 2. The cracks on the roof lead to the leaking. Visuals showed water pouring from the ceiling near the baggage conveyor belt area of Terminal 2. The section has been closed for passengers.

An official said 13 domestic flights, three international passenger flights, and one international cargo flight were diverted to Chennai on Thursday.

The Treminal 2 (T2) of the Bengaluru Airport was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 11 November, 2022. Known as a terminal in a garden, the T2 was built at a cost of Rs 5,000 crore and is recognized as one of the 'world's most beautiful airports' by UNESCO's Prix Versailles 2023. The terminal, which started domestic operations on 15 January, 2023, witnessed first incident of water leakage months after its inauguration. International flight operations began at the terminal on 12 September.



Water leakage in Terminal 2 of Kempegowda International Airport **PHOTO: TWITTER**

"A very heavy downpour of rain within a short span of time on the evening of 9 May, 2024, resulted in water leakage in certain areas of the terminals at Bengaluru airport," Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL), which operates KIA said in a statement.

"Our teams promptly responded to the situation to mitigate the impact and restore normal operations. We regret the inconvenience caused to our passengers". it added.

The rain coupled with strong winds brought down many trees in several parts of the city including, Jayanagar, Nrupathunga Nagar and RR Nagar.

The rains also brought relief to the Bengaluru residents from the blistering summer heat, which they had not witnessed for many decades.

The city has been receiving rain for the past four days.

According to the India Meteorological Department, Bengaluru city received 14 mm rain in the 24-hour period till 8.30 am on Friday.

It said in a statement the maximum and minimum temperature of the city stood at 33 and 22 degrees Celsius respectively in the last 24 hours.

—PTI

- Disruptions took place due to water leakage inside the airport Terminal 2. The cracks on the roof lead to the leaking. Visuals showed water pouring from the ceiling

POST TERMINATION

PHOTO: victoriahospitalbangalore.org

Protesting Victoria Hospital workers detained

BENGALURU, 10 MAY

VV Puram police detained 56 ward attenders and group 'D' workers who were protesting at Victoria Hospital campus here and let them off after a few hours on Friday. This protest erupted after the 56 workers in the hospital who served the hospital for over 10-15 years were terminated without any notice on Wednesday.

Protesting under the banner of Karnataka General Labour Union (AICCTU), the workers have been demanding immediate reinstatement and recognition for their years of service. The terminated workers, many of whom are women hailing from Dalit and marginalised communities, were not allowed to commence their usual duties upon arrival at the hospital on Wednesday. Despite their substantial tenure and crucial roles, they were categorised as contract workers, denying them the rights they rightfully deserve.

Medical officers of the hospital said the issue stemmed from a transition between contractors. The previous contractor had employed the protesting workers, and with the arrival of a new contractor, a fresh batch of workers were recruited, they said. Maitreyi, Secretary of AICCTU, told **Salar News**, " The termination of workers is illegal even if the contractor has changed. The law mandates that one outsourced worker cannot be replaced with another worker." *—Salar News*

HONOURING BASAVESHWARA

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar offers floral tribute to Basaveshwara Statue on Basava Jayanthi at Basaveshwara Circle, in Bengaluru on Friday. Sri Shivrudra Swamiji of Belimath, Minister Eshwar Khandre, Basava Committee President Aravinda Jatti look on. **PHOTO: SALAR**

SIT probes if rape case file was forced

BENGALURU, 10 MAY

Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the "sexual abuse" by Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, initiated an inquiry to identify those who allegedly "forced" a woman to register a "fake complaint".

The move comes after the National Commission for Women (NCW) said that one woman complainant who reached out to it claimed she was forced to register a fake complaint against the 33-year-old, who is the Lok Sabha poll candidate for Hassan and the grandson of JD(S) patriarch and former prime minister HD Deve Gowda.Sources said the investigating team headed by Additional Director General of Police B K Singh got to know about the woman only after NCW forwarded the complaint to SIT.

Prajwal Revanna **PHOTO: PTI**

A senior official who is a part of the investigation team said that no one from SIT has contacted her before and she has not filed any complaint with them in this regard."SIT has initiated an inquiry into this matter to identify the persons who made phone calls to the woman and accordingly necessary legal action will be taken against such persons," a source said.According to the NCW, the woman complainant came to the commission to register a complaint against three individuals.

—PTI

THIRD FIR FILED AGAINST PRAJWAL

BENGALURU, 10 MAY

One more rape case has been registered against JD(S) MP and Lok Sabha poll candidate from Hassan Prajwal Revanna. This takes the number of cases in the alleged sexual abuse of several women to three, police sources said.

The FIR was registered against Prajwal on 8 May in Bengaluru, according to sources in the Special Investigation Team which was constituted for a probe after a huge cache of explicit videos allegedly showing Prajwal sexually abusing several women became public.A case has been registered under IPC 376(2)(N), 376(2)(K), 354(A), 354(B), 354(C) and 506 of the IPC was registered. These cases pertain to repeated rape, filming, demand for sexual favours, and threatening.

—PTI

Have faith in SIT: CM rules out CBI probe

MYSURU, 10 MAY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday expressed confidence in the State constituted Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the sexual harassment case against JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna. He asserted that there was no need to hand it over to CBI.Hitting out at the Opposition parties, he claimed that BJP (when it was in power in the State) had never assigned even a single case to CBI and that there was a time when the outfit used to refer to CBI as 'Corruption Bureau of Investigation'.

"Former prime minister and JD(S) patriarch HD Deve Gowda used to call CBI as 'Chor Bachao Institution' and now they love CBI?" he told reporters here.He cited some cases referred to CBI during the previous Congress rule in the State and asked: "but was anyone punished in these cases?"

"Our government does not interfere in legal proceedings and investigations. Not now, nor in the past, have I instructed any police officers to do something beyond or against the law. However, there is no need for a CBI probe. Our police should be trusted," he said.

The Chief Minister made it clear that neither he nor Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar are involved in the investigation of the case.

—PTI

AYODHYA FEVER

Ram engraved coins, photos in demand this Akshaya Tritiya

VAISHNAVI GOPALRAJ
BENGALURU, 10 MAY

Bengalureans flocked to jewellery shops on Akshaya Tritiya to buy gold and silver treasures, ranging from coins to the latest designs featuring intricate motifs of deities like Ram Lalla.

Akshaya Tritiya, also known as Akha Teej, is dedicated to worshipping the deities of wealth. Tradition holds that purchasing gold or silver on this auspicious day invites prosperity into one's life.

Local goldsmiths in Nagarathpet said this year they received wholesale orders for Ram Lalla-themed pendants, rings, coins and jewellery.

At Vijayalakshmi Complex, housing around 100-150 goldsmiths, preparations began two months earlier. They produced around 5,000 gold coins featuring Ram Lalla and an additional 5,000 crafted in silver.Vishwanath Raju, a goldsmith with three decades of experience, said: "Every year, we receive orders for coins and pendants featuring Goddess Lakshmi or Gandaberunda (a two-headed bird and a form lord Vishnu). However, this year there was an overwhelming demand for Ram Lalla-themed pieces and orders for traditional motifs like Goddess Lakshmi or Gandaberunda were fewer this year."On Friday, shoppers thronged jewellery showrooms such as Davanam Jewellers, Bhima Jewellers and Kalyan Jewellers in Malleshwaram. The showrooms offered customers 10-20 per cent discount starting from Rs 4,000. Satish Acharya, manager at Davanam Jewellers, told Salar News, "This year, we witnessed a 30 per cent increase in our sales by afternoon. There was a high demand for Vanki Rings among teenagers, while middle-aged men favoured Ram Lalla coins and pendants. Jewellery sets remained popular among women shoppers."

—Salar News

Ram and Ayodhya themed coins and photo frames were a hot favourite among Bengalureans on Friday **PHOTO: SALAR**

Davangere farmers suffer over drought

DAVANGERE, 10 MAY

The district, renowned for its agricultural prowess in areca nut, sugarcane, and paddy cultivation, finds itself in the grip of an unforgiving drought. Hundreds of acres of lush green fields have transformed into desolate landscape as sugarcane withers and coconut trees stand barren.
The lifeblood of Davangere's agriculture, the water from Bhadra Reservoir, has failed to quench the parched earth, resulting in farmers already burdened by mounting debts.In Kolenahalli, Muktenahalli, and Hadadi villages, once vibrant fields now lie barren. *—Salar News*

Turf Club: HC upholds tax evasion case

BENGALURU, 10 MAY

High Court declined to dismiss a case involving alleged tax evasion by bookies operating at Bangalore Turf Club. The court stated that the evidence indicated a potential cognisable offence.

Justice S Vishwajith Shetty's bench issued the order in response to a petition filed by the bookies.

The case, registered in January stemmed from a raid prompted by information suggesting that the bookies were accepting bets without proper registration, leading to tax evasion. During the raid, authorities seized Rs 3,45,74,040.

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

The bookies' counsel argued that they were licenced and questioned the applicability of the IPC's cheating section, suggesting it was invoked due to the non-cognisable nature of other provisions. The counsel contended that any wrongdoing fell under the purview of GST officers.

Advocate General Shashikiran Shetty countered, citing the bookies' failure to issue receipts for collected GST and lack of records for TDS (tax deducted at source). He also highlighted discrepancies between reported bet amounts and expected averages over a specific period.

—PTI

Woman worker who accused WB Guv writes to Prez

KOLKATA, 10 MAY

A day after West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose screened multiple CCTV footage from Raj Bhavan, in a bid to clear the air over allegations of molestation brought against him by a contractual woman employee of the governor's house, the victim on Friday said she will seek President Droupadi Murmu's intervention into the matter. The employee raised her objections to the public screening of unedited footage where her identity was allegedly disclosed since her face wasn't blurred. Stating that she could not repose much hope on the Kolkata Police whose hands are tied on account of the constitutional immunity Governor Bose enjoys, the victim said she was going through severe depression and felt that writing to the President was the only recourse to justice. *— PTI*

ED names Kavitha as accused in Delhi excise policy case

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday filed a fresh charge sheet in the Delhi excise policy-linked money laundering case naming BRS leader K Kavitha as an accused, official sources said. The federal agency had arrested 46-year-old Kavitha, the daughter of former Telangana chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao, from her Banjara hills residence in Hyderabad on 15 March. Kaveri Baweja, the special judge for CBI, ED cases, is likely to take up the chargesheet for cognisance on 13 May. A similar complaint against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is expected to be filed next week. *—PTI*

Bogus voting: Guj man booked for live streaming

DAHOD, 10 MAY

The man arrested for live-streaming his bogus voting from a polling station in Dahod Lok Sabha constituency of Gujarat, has been booked in separate case of allegedly thrashing and intimidating a Congress party agent during the third phase of parliamentary elections on 7 May, police said on Friday. The Election Commission of India (ECI) has declared null and void the voting that took place at Parthampur polling station at Santrampur taluka in Mahisagar district, taking into account the report from the returning officer and observer regarding the irregularities, after the man's live streaming video went viral. As per the First Information Report (FIR) lodged at Santrampur police station in the state's Mahisagar district that falls under the Dahod parliamentary constituency, accused Vijay Bhabhor, son of a local BJP leader, and three others allegedly confronted a Congress polling agent, Shana Taviad at Gothib and threatened him. *PTI*

Ex-MLAs withdraw disqualification pleas from SC

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

Six former Congress MLAs on Friday withdrew their plea from the Supreme Court against the Himachal Pradesh Assembly speaker's decision to disqualify them from the House. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta was told by senior advocate Abhinav Mukherjee, appearing for the former MLAs, that they want to withdraw the petition. "We knew this was going to happen due to the elections," the bench observed while allowing them to withdraw their plea. The six former MLAs are now contesting assembly bypolls, which were necessitated after their disqualification, as BJP candidates. On 18 March, the top court had refused to stay the Himachal Pradesh Assembly speaker's order disqualifying the former MLAs who had cross-voted in the Rajya Sabha polls in the state. *—PTI*

'BEATEN, BUT NOT DEFEATED'

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal addresses supporters outside Tihar Jail after Supreme Court granted him interim bail in a money laundering case on Friday *PHOTO: PTI*

Arvind Kejriwal took blessings from his parents after reaching the Official Chief Minister's Residence *PHOTO: X/ @AAPforNewIndia*

Aam Aadmi Party supporters apply colour on each other in celebration in Delhi on Friday *PHOTO: PTI*

PM asks Pawar, Uddhav to join hands with Shinde, Ajit

Modi says the leaders 'must not die' by merging with Cong

NANDURBAR, 10 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday advised the NCP (SP) and Shiv Sena (UBT) to join hands with Ajit Pawar and Eknath Shinde after Lok Sabha poll results instead of "dying by merging" with the Congress.

"A big leader here who is active for 40-50 years is worried after polling in Baramati (Lok Sabha seat). He says that after 4 June, smaller parties, in order to survive, will merge with the Congress," Modi said, without naming Sharad Pawar.

"This means the nakli NCP and nakli Shiv Sena have made up their minds to merge with the Congress," Modi said, addressing an election rally in Nandurbar district of north Maharashtra.

"But instead of dying by merging with Congress, come to Ajit Pawar and Eknath Shinde," Modi said.

In the Nandurbar seat, the BJP has renominated incumbent MP Heena Gavi, who is pitted against Gowaal Padavi of Congress. The constituency will go to polls in the fourth phase of the general elections on 13 May.

Speaking at the rally, Modi also accused Congress of conspiring to end "Hindu aastha" (faith). The guru of Congress' 'shehzada' has told the US that Ram temple and Ram Navami festivities are against the idea of India, he said, targeting ties like Chinese, Africans, Arabs and Whites to describe the physical appearance of Indians.

Congress is anti-Hindu and it knows religion-based reservations are unconstitutional. Congress wants to make Hindus second-class citizens in their own country...The hidden agenda of the Congress is to rob you of your quota and give it to Muslims
-Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses a public meeting for Lok Sabha elections, in Hyderabad on Friday *PHOTO: PTI*

"Congress calls people with Lord Krishna's colour as Africans. So they didn't want Droupadi Murmu to be the President of India. Isn't it an insult of adivasis," he asked.

Modi said that Congress' agenda is so dangerous that if it terms Ram temple construction and Ram Navami celebrations against the idea of India. "They may say my going to temple is anti-India. See the Congress mindset, that in the land of Ram, a temple is anti-India."These people organise "sarkari Iftar" and beautify graves of terrorists, he said. In an apparent reference to Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut's alleged comment about "burying him in Maharashtra just like Mughal emperor Aurangzeb", Modi said, those from the duplicate Sena are speaking of burying him alive. They have also got a bomb blast accused for election campaigning, he said, referring to the Uddhav Thackeray-led party. "These people have lost public support and their political space has eroded. People of India are my security cover. *—PTI*

Sandeshkhali row: Now TMC accuses NCW of conspiracy

KOLKATA/NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

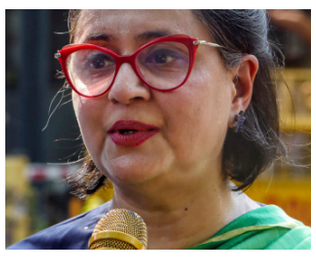


PHOTO: PTI

On a day the Trinamool Congress (TMC) accused National Commission for Women (NCW) Chairperson Rekha Sharma of "abusing her authority and being involved in a conspiracy" in Sandeshkhali, where women have claimed they were deceived by BJP into filing sexual assault complaints against TMC leaders, the NCW asserted that the women were coerced into retracting their complaints.

Stating TMC's intention to move EC against Sharma, West Bengal Minister and TMC Spokesperson Shashi Panja on Friday alleged that the NCW Chairperson acted on "political bias" over the allegations and "encouraged women of the area to level false allegations of sexual atrocities."

Later in the day, NCW in a letter to the poll panel claimed that women from the riverine area were being "compelled" to withdraw their complaints by TMC workers given the ongoing Lok Sabha polls and sought an inquiry from the Election Commission in the matter.

Sharma, after visiting Sandeshkali in February, had recommended to President Droupadi Murmu that President's Rule be imposed in West Bengal over alleged atrocities on women and violence in Sandeshkhali.

Multiple purported videos of Sandeshkhali women shared by TMC on Thursday claimed that a local saffron party leader made those women sign on blank papers which were later filled up as complaints of sexual assault.

The women in those purported videos claimed they were asked by local BJP worker Piyali Das to appear in person at the local police station and relate their ordeal before the NCW team which had visited Sandeshkhali to take stock of the situation.

The women later alleged that they never intended to lodge sexual assault complaints but were surprised to find such complaints filed in their names allegedly in the wake of the blank papers they were made to sign by Das. *—PTI*

BJP's LS campaign faltering, says Aiyar

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar on Friday said a video of his comments on Pakistan being circulated is old and being dredged up because the BJP's Lok Sabha campaign is faltering.

"It is obvious from the sweater I am wearing that my comments to Chill Pill were made in the winter several months ago. They have been dredged up now as the BJP's election campaign falters. I refuse to play their game," the Congress leader said in a statement.

"Interested persons may please read the relevant passages in my two books released by Juggernaut last year, "Memoirs of a Maverick" and "The Rajiv I Knew"..," he said.

In the video, Aiyar is saying that India should give respect to Pakistan as it possesses an atom bomb.

"If we don't give them respect, they'll think of using atom bomb against India," he said in the video.

Asked about use of India's muscular policy, he said, "We should not forget that Pakistan also has muscle at Kahuta (Rawalpindi)," a reference to the atomic bomb. *—PTI*

LOK SABHA POLLS 2024

Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu, AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge and AICC Secretary in-charge of Telangana Mansoor Ali Khan at a press conference in Hyderabad on Friday *PHOTO: X/@MANSOOR*

INDIAN SOLDIERS WITHDRAWN FROM MALDIVES

MALE, 10 MAY

India has withdrawn all its soldiers from the Maldives, the government here has said, ahead of the 10 May deadline set by President Mohamed Muizzu for the complete withdrawal of Indian military personnel from his country. The development came as Maldivian Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer visited India. He met External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday.

Repatriation of some 90 Indian military personnel stationed in the Maldives was a key pledge of Muizzu during his presidential campaign last year.

The last batch of Indian soldiers stationed in the Maldives have been repatriated, confirmed Heena Waleed, President's Office Chief Spokesperson told Sun.mv news portal, without giving the number of Indian soldiers.

She added details about the number of the soldiers stationed would be disclosed later.

The Indian military personnel were stationed in the Maldives to operate and maintain two helicopters and Dornier aircraft India gifted earlier.

Earlier, the Maldives government announced that 51 of these soldiers were repatriated to India on Monday.

The government earlier announced the presence of 89 Indian soldiers in the Maldives, citing official documents.India and the Maldives had agreed to withdraw the remaining Indian troops before 10 May.

At a media briefing in New Delhi on Thursday, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the first and the second batches of the Indian personnel returned to India and "now deputation of competent Indian technical personnel has taken place" to operate the three Indian aviation platforms. *—PTI*

ACTION SOUGHT

INDIA meets EC over voter turnout data, MCC violations

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

A delegation of Opposition party leaders on Friday met the top brass of Election Commission (EC) and raised its concerns over the delay in releasing voter turnout figures for the first two phases, and urged them to take action on complaints of model code violations by ruling BJP leaders during the ongoing polls.

Samajwadi Party leader Javed Ali, meanwhile, raised the issue of a "red card" being issued by the Uttar Pradesh Police to people in the state, which they said is stopping many from exercising their franchise.

The delegation included Congress leaders Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Salman Khurshid, TMC's Derek O'Brien, DMK's TR Baalu, JMM's Mahua Majhi, CPI's Binoy Viswam, and Ali among others.

"We have a very distinguished gathering of INDIA alliance. Each party across India is represented. We spent 45 minute to an hour," Singhvi said briefing the media after the meeting.

Congress leader Abhishek Manu Singhvi, TMC leader Derek O'Brien and INDIA bloc members at Nirvachan Sadan, in New Delhi *PHOTO: PTI*

"Issue number one was one of great trust deficit, question mark and a feeling of alarm and distress that 11 complaints by Congress alone, and complaints by all parties put together against the Prime Minister and Home Minister, starting from early April, have not been addressed," Singhvi said.

He said they have not been informed about the response to the EC notice, or about the action being taken. "Why there is a delay?"

He also hinted that the opposition parties may approach Supreme Court with the issue.

Singhvi said the second issue raised was the "non-publication or publication with extreme delay of the voter turnout percentages." *—PTI*

SC disposes Soren's plea in laundering case

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

The Supreme Court on Friday disposed of a plea filed by former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren seeking a direction to the high court to deliver its verdict on his petition challenging his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate in a money laundering case.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta observed that the petition has become infructuous as the High Court has delivered its judgement on 3 May and Soren has already challenged the same in the apex court.

Soren had also sought interim bail for campaigning in the Lok Sabha elections till the high court delivers its verdict on his plea against arrest.

"This has become infructuous," the bench told senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Arunabh Chowdhury, who were appearing for Soren.

PHOTO: PTI

Sibal said Soren's special leave petition (SLP) challenging the last week's verdict of the high court is coming up for hearing before the top court on 13 May.

He said both the petitions be heard together on 13 May.

The bench, however, said Soren's counsel can raise all the contentions in the SLP which will come up for hearing on 13 May.

"Forget that he is a former chief minister. I (Soren) have a right as a citizen to be dealt with fairly by the high court," Sibal said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

MP man kills foster mother, buries body in bathroom

GWALIOR, 10 MAY

A 24-year-old man allegedly killed his mother and buried her in the bathroom of his house in Madhya Pradesh's Sheopur district to get his hands on Rs 30 lakh she had in a fixed deposit, police said on Friday. The police on Thursday arrested the accused, Deepak Pachauri, for the murder of his mother, Usha,65, an official said. Deepak, the victim's adopted son, lodged a complaint with Kotwali police in Sheopur town earlier this week, claiming that his mother had gone missing from their home, Sheopur Superintendent of Police Abhishek Anand told PTI. During the probe, the police questioned Deepak, his relatives and neighbours, he said. The police got suspicious when he started making contradictory statements, and investigations revealed that he had lost Rs 15 lakh in the share market and needed money desperately. The accused confessed that he killed his mother to get Rs 30 lakh, he said. —*PTI*

Murder accused of Tata steel official killed in encounter

GHAZIABAD/LUCKNOW, 10 MAY

An accused in the murder of a Tata Steel official was killed in an encounter in Ghaziabad district in the early hours of Friday, the Uttar Pradesh Police said. Vinay Tyagi, the India sales head of Tata Steel, was murdered on 4 May. The police said in a statement, "On 10 May, a police team of Shalimar Garden police station (in Ghaziabad) was conducting checks for the wanted accused in view of the criminal incidents and was checking in Kanha premises of the police station area when suddenly two motorcyclists ran away fast. On being chased, the motorcycle slipped and fell in front of the closed gate of a building." The riders then opened fire at the police, leading to the cops retaliating in self-defence. —*PTI*

7 booked for cheating Axis Bank of ₹22.2 crore

MUMBAI, 9 MAY

Seven directors of a finance firm were booked for allegedly cheating Axis Bank of Rs 22.29 crore, a Mumbai police official said on Thursday. The case of cheating, forgery and criminal breach of trust was registered at Cuffe Parade police station on the instructions of the court, he said. The First Information Report (FIR) is based on the complaint filed by a 43-year-old assistant vice president of Axis Bank, the official added. "Directors of Better Value Leasing and Finance Limited Company conspired with each other between March 2016 and March 2020 and did not repay loans they had taken from Axis bank. —*PTI*

Kerala board bans use of toxic Arali flowers in temple

T'PURAM, 10 MAY

Kerala's Travancore Devaswom Board has decided to ban the use of Arali flowers (Oleander) in temples under its administration, said board president PS Prasnth. The decision was taken in the Devaswom board meeting held on Thursday.The Devaswom board has taken this decision considering the toxic content in the Arali flowers. Notably, a young woman collapsed in Nedumbassery airport recently and she died later. Her postmortem reports confirmed that the toxic content of Arali flowers, which she had consumed, led to her death. Last week, a cow and it's calf died in Pathanamthitta district in the state after accidentally consuming Arali. —*ANI*

Backing Khalistanis is not freedom of speech: EAM

Jaishankar hits out at Canada yet again for 'supporting separatists'

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

By allowing political space to Khalistani separatist elements, the Canadian government is sending a message that its vote bank is "more powerful" than its rule of law, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said.

In an exclusive interview to PTI late Thursday, Jaishankar said India respects and practices freedom of speech, but that does not equate with freedom to threaten foreign diplomats, extend support to separatism or allow political space to elements advocating violence.

The external affairs minister also wondered how people with dubious backgrounds are being allowed to enter and live in Canada, referring to Khalistani supporters among the Sikh migrants from Punjab.

"In any rules-based society, you would imagine that you would check people's background, how they came, what passport they carried etc," he said.

"If you have people whose presence there is itself on very dubious documents, what does it say about you? It actually says that your vote bank is more powerful than your rule of law," the minister said.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said how people with dubious backgrounds are being allowed to enter and live in Canada PHOTO: X

Ties between India and Canada came under severe strain following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in September last year of the "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Nijjar.

New Delhi rejected Trudeau's charges as "absurd". India has been maintaining that the main issue has been that of Canada giving space to pro-Khalistani elements operating from Canadian soil with impunity.

"It is not so much a question of running out of options. What we have seen to our regret has been the direction of Canadian politics where separatists and extremist forces, many of whom openly advocate violence, have been given political space in that country," Jaishankar said.

"And there are people in positions of prominence today in Canadian politics who actually espouse that kind of separatism and extremism," he said.

His remarks came in response to a question on how India plans to deal with challenges emanating from Canada and whether the options for New Delhi are running out.

"We cannot for the good relations overlook that," he said during the freewheeling interview at PTI's headquarters.

Jaishankar said Canada's response to India's concerns has been that it has freedom of speech.

"Whenever we have taken this up with the Canadians..it is not a new issue... It has been going on almost for 10 years and they keep saying, oh 'we have freedom of speech'."

"We also have freedom of speech in our country. But freedom of speech does not mean freedom to threaten foreign diplomats, freedom of speech does not mean the kind of positions and the kind of activities which people in Canada are doing which does harm to our country because of its support for separatism," Jaishankar said. —*PTI*

US AMBASSADOR SPEAKS

Pannun case: US 'satisfied' with its action on India

WASHINGTON, 10 MAY

The US is "satisfied" with the accountability it has demanded from India on the allegations that its officials were involved in an alleged plot to kill a Sikh separatist on American soil, US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti has said.

In November last year, US federal prosecutors charged Indian national Nikhil Gupta with working with an Indian government employee in the foiled plot to kill Gurpatwant Singh Pannun.

Pannun, wanted in India on terror charges, holds dual citizenship of the US and Canada. He has been designated as a terrorist by the Union Home Ministry under the anti-terror law Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

"When I was referring to a relationship that might have bumps along the road, this would be potentially the first big fight in a relationship," Garcetti said in response to a question at an event organised on Thursday by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), a top American think-tank.

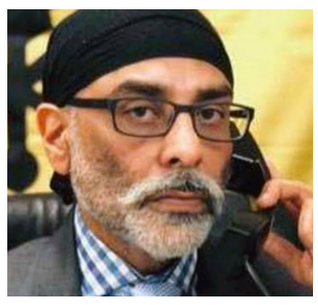


PHOTO: PTI

"And so far, knock on wood, I would say the administration is satisfied with the accountability that we've demanded on this, because this is a red line for America, for our citizens," he said.

He said it was an ongoing criminal case.

"There's an indictment that's been brought. And if there is any connection to State actors in that, there has to be accountability. We expect that not only from our side, but we expect India to have that accountability," he said. —*PTI*

CHAR DHAM BEGINS

Devotees arrive to offer prayers at the Kedarnath Temple after its doors opened, marking the start of the 'Char Dham Yatra', in Rudraprayag district on Friday PHOTO: PTI

AI Express cancels 75 flights, normalcy expected

MUMBAI/ NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

Air India Express on Friday cancelled around 75 flights due to cabin crew shortage and operations are expected to normalise by Sunday, an official said, a day after a section of the cabin crew called off their strike, that had resulted in significant operational disruptions.

The revenue losses caused due to the flight cancellations and compensation to passengers are anticipated to be around Rs 30 crore, the official told PTI.

There was no comment from the official spokesperson of Air India Express.

The strike by a section of the cabin crew since Tuesday night that resulted in cancellation of more than 170 flights was called off on Thursday evening and the airline also withdrew termination letters issued to 25 striking cabin crew.

The official, on the condition of anonymity, said that around 75 flights have been cancelled for Friday and the number is less than 100 on Thursday.

On Saturday, the number of flight cancellations are expected to be around 45-50, the official added.

The airline, on Thursday afternoon, said it has cancelled 85 flights or around 23 per cent of the total daily capacity.

The Tata Group airline, which operates around 380 flights daily, has curtailed operations in the wake of the strike, as part of efforts to minimise disruptions. Since Tuesday night, the carrier has cancelled more than 260 flights. —*PTI*

NEET ASPIRANT BEATEN TO DEATH BY GIRL'S FAMILY

JAIPUR, 10 MAY

A 17-year old NEET aspirant was beaten to death in Rajasthan's Nagaur district by the family members of a girl whom he befriended through social media, police said on Friday.

The boy had gone to meet the girl,15, in her village under Merta city police station area on Wednesday when the family members of the girl caught them in an agriculture field, they said.

They thrashed the teenager, leaving him critically injured, Deputy SP Pintu Kumar said, adding that the girl's family later admitted him to a hospital but he had died by then. The boy, was from Bihar, was living in Kota, police said. —*PTI*

Ahmedabad bomb threat mails traced to Pakistan

AHMEDABAD, 10 MAY

Emails threatening blasts sent to at least 36 Ahmedabad-based schools on the eve of the 7 May voting have been traced to Pakistan, the police said on Friday, labelling them as an attempt to spread fear among the people ahead of polling.

"The emails were sent from 'mail.ru' domain, in which a man impersonating himself as Tauheed Liaquat sent them to all the schools with the aim of spreading fear among voters and Indian citizens," the Ahmedabad crime branch said in a press statement.

Liaquat had also assumed another identity as Hamad Javed.

Emails threatening bomb blasts were sent to at least 36 Ahmedabad-based schools on the eve of 7 May PHOTO: ANI

The person with these names was operating from Faisalabad district of Pakistan, Joint Commissioner of Police Sharad Singhal said.

The same person has created various identities on different social media platforms, one of them being that of Hamad Javed. These social media platforms are used to spread anti-India messages, rumours and fear among Indians, he said."It is possible that the name was created to spread fear and rumour. But one thing is certain the mails were sent using mail.ru domain and the location was traced to the Faisalabad cantonment area in Pakistan," he said.

Further investigation is underway and agencies like the Intelligence Bureau (IB), Anti Terrorist Squad (ATS), National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) and Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) have been contacted, Singhal said. —*PTI*

Court convicts killer of Kerala pharmacist in 2022

KANNUR, 10 MAY

A Kerala court on Friday found a man guilty of the brutal murder of a 21-year-old woman pharmacist at her home near Panur in the northern Kerala district of Kannur in October 2022.

The Thalassery Additional District Sessions Court found the accused, Shyamjith, guilty of killing the victim, Vishnupriya.

It will pronounce the order on the sentence on 13 May, Public Prosecutor K Ajith Kumar said.The prosecutor said that the accused killed the woman as she had ended their friendship and was close to another man. Kumar said that Shyamjith first hit Vishnupriya on the head with a hammer and when she fell down, he slit her throat. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

NCERT may include India's research works

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

India's strides in research on the Arctic, Antarctica and the Himalayas may soon figure in school textbooks, with the Union Ministry of Earth Sciences reaching out to the NCERT to include the latest developments in its curriculum.

Ministry of Earth Sciences Secretary M Ravichandran said the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has constituted a committee to bring out the importance of research in these areas in school textbooks.

"We wrote a letter to them ... they (NCERT) have recently constituted a committee for bringing out importance of the Antarctica expedition, Arctic and also the Himalayas and some other aspects, including climate change. They are working on it," Ravichandran said during an interaction with PTI editors here.

The Antarctica expedition finds mention in NCERT textbooks but the content hasn't been updated for a long time. There is very limited mention of the ongoing research in the Arctic and the Himalayan regions, too.

In a rationalisation exercise post COVID-19, the NCERT dropped topics such as climate change, monsoon and greenhouse effect from textbooks, triggering a controversy.

The council later clarified that the subjects had been dropped to reduce curriculum load in view of the pandemic and added that the topics would be restored with the release of books based on the new curriculum framework.

These books are currently being worked on and will be available for all classes by 2026.The Union Ministry of Earth Sciences is hosting the 46th meeting of the ATCM, the highest governing body for Antarctica, and the 26th CEP meeting.

The crucial meets will be held in Kochi from May 20-30 where countries engaged in research in the southern polar region will share the outcome of their scientific pursuits and future plans.India has two active research stations -- Maitri and Bharti -- in Antarctica. The first research station, Dakshin Gangotri, set up in 1983, had to be abandoned after it sank in the snow. —*PTI*

INDIA, MOLDOVA SIGN VISA WAIVER AGREEMENT

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

India and Moldova on Friday signed an agreement which after coming into force, will allow diplomatic and official passports holders of either country to travel to the other without a visa, the Ministry of External Affairs said.

This agreement will add "further momentum" to the friendly and cordial relations between the two countries, it said.

"Pavan Kapoor, Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs of the Republic of India and Ana Taban, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Moldova, on behalf of their respective governments, signed an agreement on visa waiver for diplomatic and official passports, today on 10 May," the statement said.

This agreement, after coming into force "will allow holders of diplomatic and official passports of either country to travel to the other, without a visa", it said. —*PTI*

LOWEST IN A DECADE

South India's water levels plunge

NEW DELHI,10 MAY

With the southern region most hit at just 15 per cent total live storage capacity in reservoirs, the storage capacity this year is below the average of last 10 years during the corresponding period, the Central Water Commission (CWC) data has revealed.

The CWC's analysis also indicated a week-on-week decrease in storage levels, affecting not only the southern region but also the nation as a whole.

As of last Thursday, the southern region's reservoir capacity stood at 16 per cent, dropping from 17 per cent the previous week.

The bulletin from the CWC said the southern region has been severely impacted, with reservoirs operating at only 15 per cent of their total live storage capacity.The data from the CWC shows that storage levels this year are lower than both the corresponding period last year and the ten-year average for the same period.

Nationally, out of 150 monitored reservoirs, the total live storage capacity is 178.784 billion cubic metres (BCM), approximately 69.35 per cent of the estimated 257.812 BCM created across the country.

As of last Thursday, the southern region's reservoir capacity stood at 16 per cent, dropping from 17 per cent the previous week PHOTO: PTI

However, the live storage available in these reservoirs currently sits at 27 per cent, down from 36 per cent recorded last year and 32 per cent on average over the past decade.

Compared with historical data, the bulletin highlights that the current live storage is only 79 per cent of last year's levels and 92 per cent of the 10-year average for the corresponding period.

The storage during the current year is lower than that of the corresponding period last year in all of the country while it is below the average storage of the last 10 years during the corresponding period in northern, eastern southern and western. The southern region, encompassing Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, has a total live storage capacity of 53.334 BCM. According to the reservoir storage bulletin dated 9 May , the available live storage in these reservoirs is 7.921 BCM, constituting only 15 per cent of their total capacity. —*PTI*

FLOOD FURY

A soldier carries a dog at the front of a boat after rescuing it from a flooded area after heavy rain in Canoas, Rio Grande do Sul state, Brazil. So far, 107 people have died in the severe flooding in southern Brazil. The floods have destroyed infrastructure blocking access to Porto Alegre, where supermarkets have been reported to be looted
PHOTO: PTI

Why is no one talking about climate change?

LOK SABHA ELECTIONS 2024

A 2022 study found that between 1999 and 2019, only 0.3 per cent of questions raised by politicians were about climate change
PHOTO: PTI

When Yamuna River, which runs through overflowed its banks last year, New Delhi found itself plunged into a flood emergency.

At the height of the crisis, Bhagwati Devi, who runs a small vegetable farm in the low-lying Yamuna plains on the outskirts of New Delhi, had to be evacuated to higher ground.

"We spent the entire night stranded up on a tree before we were evacuated," she said.

The 37-year-old said she spent the following weeks in abysmal conditions on the capital's highway as her shanty was washed away — along with many of her belongings.

Devi's livelihood suffered for months as her crop was destroyed in the floodwaters.

Environmental experts blamed heavy rainfall in northern states along with poor urban planning for New Delhi's floods.

This year, Devi will cast her vote in the ongoing national elections. But, unaware of the scientific phenomenon of climate change, which is wreaking havoc in her daily life, it will not influence her vote.

The case of Devi is not an outlier, as anecdotal evidence suggests that the issue of climate change is rarely seen trickling down in India's electoral politics.

Why isn't environment a hot-button election issue?

Experts say that the discourse around climate change is not actually missing it's just different.

"The politics of climate change in India is just not labeled neatly as 'climate change' but it does not mean that climate change is not shaping the Indian politics," said Aditya Valiathan Pillai, a fellow at the New Delhi-based Sustainable Futures Collaborative, an independent climate change research organization.

Most of the politics around climate change translates into finding ways to solve the consequences of climate change — which can be seen if we look at the mobilization around irrigation, lack of access to water, demands for farm loan waivers etc., he explained.

"In party manifestos, many sectoral promises are climate-related but not placed within the climate chapters," he said.

- Experts say that the discourse around climate change is not actually missing it's just different

Connecting the dots

Aarti Khosla, founder of Climate Trends, an Indian research-based consulting initiative, explained that to many people climate change in itself is never the issue — but it becomes an issue when it makes other problems more pronounced.

"We continue to think that climate politics only exists when there is a Green Party like that in the West or when the exact terminology of 'climate change' is used in manifestos," she said.

"I don't think climate change will be addressed like that in India anytime soon."

How do Indian voters perceive climate change?

Observers believe that awareness about climate change in India is growing.

Only 9 per cent of Indians said they know "a lot" about global warming. But when given a small definition of global warming, a resounding 84 per cent said that it is happening, according to the findings of a 2022 survey.

The study also reported that 81per cent of Indians are "very worried" about global warming.

"I think people are much more aware than what we give them credit for," Khosla said.

But despite the growing concern, it has not yet become a major issue in electoral politics.

How are politicians responding to climate change?

Even in the Indian Parliament, the discourse around climate change has been largely ignored.

A 2022 study found that between 1999 and 2019, only 0.3 per cent of questions raised by politicians were about climate change.

"Speeches on climate change do not connect with the public unless there is a triggering issue," said Rajeev Gowda, a candidate from the Congress party contesting the southern Indian city of Bengaluru, which is experiencing a water crisis."We actually repel a lot of people by saying it's climate change," said Khosla.

If we present climate change in terms of more palpable events of day-to-day life, then we can get more people to understand it, she said.

In case of Devi, while perhaps she does not know what climate change truly means, its consequences have not gone unnoticed to her. "Earlier the crop yield used to be much higher and we could get potable water directly from handpumps but now we depend on water tankers.

Courtesy, DW News

LETTERS write to us at salar@salar.news

SALAR سالار

Food labels misleading, says new dietary rules

The recently released dietary guidelines by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) warned that the information presented on packaged food can be misleading.

"Health claims on packaged food are designed to catch the consumer's attention and convince them that the product is healthy," the guidelines drafted with the help of the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) informed.

A notable example in the advisory was 'sugar-free foods' associated with low calories, preferred by diabetics or people watching their weight. The document titled Dietary Guidelines for India 2024 released 8 May, 2024 warned:

Sugar-free foods may be loaded with fats, refined cereals (white flour, starch) and even hidden sugars (maltitol, fructose, corn syrup, molasses). These would imply high glycaemic index and high calories in the food item.

Food products often loosely state they are "all-natural", the health research organisations stressed. On the contrary, they could have added flavours or substances, with minimal processing, they added. Manufacturers can see through this and identify a few natural ingredients when they see this displayed on the label, the authors of the document explained.

Another popular claim, they observed, was on the proportion of the nutrient offered in a single serving of a product marketed as a "good source of protein, vitamin D or other nutrients". To make an accurate judgment, the doctors suggested that people should read about the quantity of these nutrients with reference to daily requirements.

Further, not all organic food claims should be believed, the guidelines reminded. "When a food label states 'organic', it may simply mean that it is free of all artificial preservatives, flavours and colours, and that the food ingredients are free from pesticides and chemical fertilisers. If both the above are met, then the label can state 100 per cent organic and have the 'Jaivik Bharat' logo approved by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)," the authors noted.

Any food item, including fruit juices containing only 10 or less per cent of fruit, is allowed to display that the product is made with real fruit pulp or juice, according to FSSAI. "But the product claiming to have real fruit may have added sugar and other additives with only 10 per cent actual fruit pulp," the researchers added.

All oils are 100 per cent fat and, therefore, should be consumed in moderate quantities. Still certain oils claim to have no cholesterol or are heart friendly on the label, the document warns.

Among the 17 dietary guidelines, ICMR asked consumers to read information on food labels to make informed and healthy food choices. It also suggested minimising the consumption of high fat, sugar, salt and ultra-processed foods.

The World Health Organization is considering revising its recommendation and reducing calories from sugar to less than five per cent kilocalories a day, according to ICMR. "If possible, added sugar may be completely eliminated from one's diet as it adds no nutritive value other than calories. Calories are healthy only when accompanied by vitamins, minerals and fibres," the scientists stressed.Director of NIN R Hemalatha, said "If you consume sugar, at least try to restrict it to around 30 grams a day. If you don't take sugar, it's good for health. As much as possible, avoid sugar, especially for children younger than two," she said. "Totally avoid sugar and make recipes without sugar if possible."

If consumed long-term, ICMR-NIN authors said, sugar substitutes such as sweetening agents like aspartame, and saccharin, can lead to obesity, diabetes, hypertension and other non-communicable diseases. "Sugar substitutes can be harmful to your body if it is consumed regularly in high quantities," Hemalatha said. ICMR also said that fortification of ultra-processed food cannot make them wholesome or healthy, which is a technique used to add certain nutrients to unhealthy food.

"High fat foods and high sugar foods are energy dense (high calorie foods and poor in vitamins, minerals & fibre). Regular consumption of these foods not only causes overweight and obesity but also deprives one from taking healthy foods that provide essential macronutrients (amino acids and fats), fibre and micronutrients such as vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients, bio-active substances," the research body said.

Around 56 per cent of India's total disease burden is due to unhealthy diets, studies showed. Healthy diets and physical activity can reduce a substantial proportion of coronary heart disease and hypertension and prevent upto 80 per cent of type 2 diabetes, ICMR highlighted.

The scientists who drew up the dietary guidelines also advised against consuming high quantities of protein, especially in the form of protein supplement powders, as commonly practiced by athletes.

Courtesy, DownToEarth

The Indian Council of Medical Research asked consumers to read information on food labels to make informed and healthy food choices
PHOTO: PTI

An election protest brews in 'Araku valley', the Indian coffee capital

The valley has 156 villages with a total population of 56,674 people, of which an estimated 20,000 people work in the coffee industry
PHOTO: AL JAZEERA

Gemmala Sita is proud of the coffee beans she grows on what is among the world's largest organic, fair-trade plantations. Her Arabica beans end up as steaming cups of coffee in the chic cafes of Paris and Dubai, Stockholm and Rome.

But the 29-year-old's own life is a struggle for the basics. She must bathe in a makeshift washroom made of bamboo and covered with used household cloths.

Sita and her 45-year-old husband G Raja Rao are among 450 members of a tribal community that lives in Gondivalasa village in Araku Valley, on eastern highlands facing the Bay of Bengal. The region in Andhra Pradesh is dotted with coffee fields renowned for its Arabica beans that are grown as an intercrop along with black pepper. When leaders from G20 nations visited New Delhi for the grouping's annual summit last September, the government gifted them this coffee.

Yet in Araku Valley, it is a protest that is brewing.

In India's 2019 national election, the coffee hub grabbed headlines after more voters picked 'None of the Above' (NOTA) from a long list of candidate options than the combined votes secured by BJP and Congress. Only one other constituency in all of India registered more NOTA votes than Araku's 47,977 votes – a direct message from voters that they did not find any candidate worth supporting. In 2014, too, Araku notched up the highest NOTA tally of 16,352 votes for any constituency in Andhra Pradesh.

And since then, the disillusionment among voters like Sita has only grown – as India's ongoing national election rolls around to Araku Valley, which is scheduled to vote on 13 May. In October 2019, Modi declared India open defecation-free. Sita knows that's not true.

"It would have been better had there been toilets in the houses, but we have to go out in the open every morning to defecate," she said. "We have no other option."

The valley itself has 156 villages with a total population of 56,674 people, of which an estimated 20,000 people work in the coffee industry. The district it belongs to has a total of 230,000 coffee farmers. Most people involved in coffee farming come from tribal communities.

The annual unroasted coffee bean production of the entire district was around 15,000 metric tonnes in 2023-24. About 90 percent of Araku's coffee is exported to Sweden, the United Arab Emirates, Italy, Switzerland and other nations, according to the Trade Promotion Council of India. It is sold as gourmet coffee in Paris.

The government buys about 10 percent of the coffee from Araku farmers, while private firms buy the rest of it and process it, mostly for exports. The district's coffee exports bring in 4 billion rupees in annual revenue, said Ramesh. Overall, India is Asia's third-largest coffee producer.

The men in Gondivalasa bathe in a manhole they've built. There's no drainage system. While the administration has built some public toilets, it has not provided water connections or septic tanks for human waste. The result: The toilets lie unused.

About 96 villages in the valley depend on one primary health centre (PHC) that is desperately short of medical staff. "We have just one general physician here and no specialist," said Majji Bhadrayya, who heads the PHC.

While the health centre can do normal deliveries, it does not have the resources to carry out caesarean procedures. Patients often need to walk up to 10km (6 miles) to get to the clinic. Villagers carry those who can't walk on makeshift stretchers made of clothes and tied to sticks. The health centre refers more serious cases to a larger hospital 7km (4.3 miles) away, said Bhadrayya. But that hospital too, a doctor there said on condition of anonymity, is missing specialists in key fields, as well as MRI and CT scan facilities.

Some villages have no proper roads connecting them to the clinic and hospital. In other cases, the roads are littered with potholes. Many parts of the region have no streetlights – so travelling after dusk is even more dangerous. And there's only one college in the valley that offers degrees.

Tummidi Abhishek, an assistant executive engineer in the state government's Tribal Welfare Department acknowledged that these shortages are "severe" in parts of the valley. But he insisted that the state government, under the regional YSR Congress Party, was "taking steps to improve the conditions in the valley and also in interior areas that had no accessibility before".

These steps include the construction of so-called "multiple purpose centres" that would serve both as venues for community events and basic medical facilities – with labs for medical tests, midwives to help with deliveries and a room for doctors to examine patients. Abhishek said the government was also committed to building roads connecting remote villages to these facilities.

But the farmers of Araku have heard similar promises before. And it is not just the government that they feel bitter towards.

That sense of neglect from the government and the feeling of exploitation by the coffee industry have all made Araku fertile terrain for India's Maoist rebels – who lead a far-left, armed movement spanning several states aimed at overthrowing the Indian state.

In 2018, Maoists shot dead two politicians hailing from the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), a regional political party in the state. In the past, Maoist fighters have also called on the valley's people to boycott elections, said Vundrakonda Haribabu, a political scientist at Andhra University.

Yet, Araku's coffee farmers have defied the Maoists to vote – tens of thousands of them instead choosing NOTA in 2019 as a way of registering their protest.

And five years later, many are convinced that remains their best bet at being heard.

Courtesy, Al Jazeera

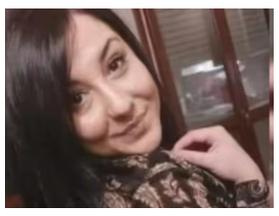


PHOTO: X

Zipline horror as woman plunges 60ft to her death

BITTO VALLEY, 10 MAY

A woman died after she slipped from her safety harness and fell 60ft during a mile-long zipline ride over Italy's Bitto Valley. Ghizlane Moutahir, 41, died on Sunday after she fell to the ground at the Fly Emotion park in Alpi Orobie at Bema. She was approaching the end of the mile-long, high-wire thrill when witnesses said she began to 'struggle' and then slipped out of her harness. Paramedics raced to the scene but there was nothing that could be done. Police and prosecutors have since opened an investigation for 'negligent homicide by persons unknown'. Moutahir's two nieces, who had just completed their flight on the zipline, watched their aunt take her turn and were filming when tragedy struck.

—Courtesy, Daily Mail

Air Vanuatu files for bankruptcy after cancelling flights

MELBOURNE, 10 MAY

Air Vanuatu filed for bankruptcy protection on Friday a day after the South Pacific state-owned carrier cancelled all international flights, stranding thousands of travellers. The airline on Wednesday cancelled more than 20 flights to and from the Australian cities of Sydney and Brisbane, and the New Zealand city of Auckland for the rest of the week. The airline said it was the result of "extended maintenance requirements" on their aircraft. Ernst & Young Australia's Morgan Kelly, Justin Walsh and Andrew Hanson were appointed liquidators in an equivalent of a US Chapter 11 bankruptcy, the firm said in a statement. The liquidators said safety and maintenance checks would be made before normal operations resumed.

—AP

Iranians vote in parliamentary runoff polls

TEHRAN, 10 MAY

Iranians voted Friday in a runoff election for the remaining seats in the country's parliament after hardline politicians dominated March balloting. People in 22 constituencies across the country will elect 45 representatives from a pool of 90 candidates, 15 of whom are considered moderate. In the capital, Tehran, 16 representatives will be chosen from 32 candidates, all hard-liners. Final results are expected on Monday, though counts in smaller constituencies are likely before that. Iran's parliament plays a secondary role in governing the country. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has the final say in all important state matters.

—AP

Pope urges Italians to have babies as hope for future

ROME, 10 MAY

Pope Francis pressed his campaign Friday to urge Italians to have children, calling for long-term policies to help families and warning that the country's demographic crisis was threatening the future. "The number of births is the first indicator of the hope of a people," Francis told an annual gathering of pro-family groups. "Without children and young people, a country loses its desire for the future." It was Francis' latest appeal for Italy – and beyond that Europe – to invert what he has called the demographic winter facing many industrialised countries. Italy's birth rate, already one of the lowest in the world, has been falling for about 15 years and reached a record low last year with 3,79,000 babies born. Premier Giorgia Meloni has mounted a campaign to encourage at least 5,00,000 births annually. *—AP*

Defiant Bibi shrugs off US arms halt threat

Netanyahu says Israel can stand alone and fight with its fingernails as it bombs Rafah

RAFAH, 10 MAY

Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed Israel can "stand alone", after the US warned arms shipments could be stopped if he orders a full-scale invasion of Rafah in Gaza.

"If we need to ... we will stand alone. I have said that if necessary we will fight with our fingernails," the prime minister said.

US President Joe Biden has repeatedly warned against the operation, saying that it would cross a "red line".

But Netanyahu dismissed the US warning, saying Israel would fight on.

Netanyahu also invoked the war of 1948 - where the newly formed State of Israel was attacked by a coalition of Arab states - to dismiss the US warnings.

Despite Netanyahu's comments, his government has come under pressure after the US suspended the delivery of 1,800 907kg bombs and 1,700 bombs over fears that they could cause civilian deaths in Rafah.

About 110,000 people have fled Rafah in southern Gaza and food and fuel supplies in the area are critically low, a UN official says.

Despite Netanyahu's comments, his government has come under pressure after the US suspended the delivery of bombs *PHOTO: BBC NEWS*

All crossings into southern Gaza remain closed, cutting off supplies and preventing medical evacuations and the movement of humanitarian staff, said Georgios Petropoulos, an official for the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs working in Rafah.

Some 1.3 million Palestinians — over half Gaza's population — had sought refuge in Rafah.

Over the last two days, the Israeli military has sent text messages, made phone calls, and dropped leaflets warning people against staying in Rafah, despite the fact that it has stated its operations are limited to the eastern part of Rafah city.

Residential towers and public facilities across Rafah city are being directly targeted by F-16 aircraft and attack drones.

According to eyewitnesses, the eastern part of Rafah city – and the area close to the Rafah crossing – is pretty much cleared of all residential buildings and public facilities, making it easy for the Israeli military to manoeuvre and push deeper inside the city.

- There are more reports of civilian casualties arriving to the Kuwaiti Hospital, as well as to field hospitals. An Israeli attack near Khan Younis killed at least eight people.

There are more reports of civilian casualties arriving to the Kuwaiti Hospital, as well as to field hospitals.

An Israeli air attack on a home near Khan Younis killed at least eight people from the same family.

Meanwhile, Israeli settlers have made it difficult for aid relief to enter through any crossing into Gaza. Although Rafah is the main crossing for aid to enter Gaza, demonstrations by Israeli settlers have added to the stranglehold on life-saving supplies by blocking a road near the Karem Abu Salem (Kerem Shalom) crossing. *—Agencies*

UNRWA HQ shut after Israelis set it on fire

JERUSALEM, 10 MAY

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees is closing its Jerusalem compound after Israeli protesters twice set fire to its perimeter.

Philipe Lazzarini, the commissioner-general of UNRWA, said no one was injured but that staff had to put the fires out themselves because firefighters and police were slow to arrive.

He shared video of Thursday's protest, in which the crowd can be heard chanting "Burn the UN" in Hebrew. In a post on the platform X, Lazzarini called it an "outrageous development," saying "once again, the lives of UN staff were at a serious risk."

He said that in light of the "appalling incident" he had taken the decision to shut down the compound.

On Tuesday, protesters damaged the gate of the compound, prompting the UN to lodge a protest with Israeli authorities.

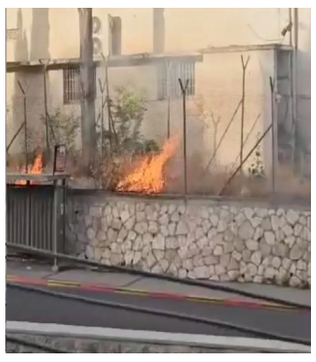


PHOTO: AL JAZEERA

Israel has accused UNRWA, which is the largest provider of humanitarian aid to Gaza, of having links to Hamas. UNRWA denies any links to such groups.

An independent review last month found that UNRWA had submitted full lists of its thousands of staffers to Israel every year since 2011, without Israel expressing concern about any of them.

—AP

Reportedly, USD 5 billion from Saudi Arabia, USD 3 billion from the UAE and USD 4 billion from China will be rolled over soon *PHOTO: PTI*

Pak to seek $12B aid from China & Saudi

ISLAMABAD, 10 MAY

Pakistan has decided to seek a rollover of around USD 12 billion debt from key allies like China in the 2024-25 fiscal year. This is to meet a whopping USD 23 billion worth of gap in its external financing as the federal government aims to achieve budget targets before the expected arrival of an IMF team to the cash-strapped country.

According to the Finance Ministry insiders, USD 5 billion from Saudi Arabia, USD 3 billion from the UAE and USD 4 billion from China will be rolled over, adding that the estimate of further new financing from China would also be included in the next financial year's budget, The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

Pakistan will receive more than USD 1 billion from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under the fresh loan programme, whereas new financing from the World Bank and Asian Development Bank has also been included in the estimated budget.

According to the Finance Ministry sources, new loan programme agreements will be made with financial institutions. The federal government aims to achieve budget targets before the anticipated arrival of the IMF review mission in Pakistan. Negotiations for a new loan programme with the global lender are expected to commence in mid-May. *—PTI*

IMRAN'S WIFE RIGHT VIOLATED IN SUB-JAIL: PAK HC

ISLAMABAD, 10 MAY

A Pakistani High Court has concluded that the state transgressed the right to life of former premier Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi by confining her at her private residence designated as a sub-jail and depriving her of interaction with other prisoners, a media report said on Friday.

On Wednesday, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) ordered the former first lady's transfer to the high-security Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi, where her 71-year-old husband Khan has been jailed.

Bushra Bibi, 49, had been incarcerated at Bani Gala, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party founder's mansion in the suburbs of Islamabad, after conviction in two cases, while Khan was kept at the Adiala Jail.

On Thursday, the IHC issued a 15-page written order in which it said that the state has not just made the sentence of simple imprisonment harsher and heavier but has also violated Bushra Bibi's right to life guaranteed under Article 9 of the Constitution, The Express Tribune newspaper reported. *—AP*

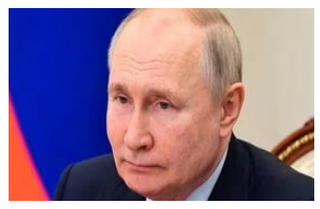
WIDELY ANTICIPATED MOVE

Putin reappoints his PM, a technocrat with low profile

MOSCOW, 10 MAY

Russian President Vladimir Putin reappointed Mikhail Mishustin as the country's prime minister on Friday, a widely anticipated move to keep on a technocrat who has maintained a low political profile.

Mishustin and other technocrats in the Cabinet have been credited with maintaining a relatively stable economic performance despite bruising Western sanctions for Russia's role in Ukraine. Most other Cabinet members are expected to keep their jobs, though the fate of Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu appeared uncertain. In line with Russian law, Mishustin, 58, who held the job for the past four years, submitted his Cabinet's resignation on Tuesday when Putin began his fifth presidential term at a glittering Kremlin inauguration.



Vladimir Putin *PHOTO: PTI*

Mishustin, the former head of Russia's tax service, steered clear of political statements and avoided media interviews during his previous tenure.

The speaker of the parliament's lower house, Vyacheslav Volodin, announced that Putin submitted Mishustin's candidacy to the State Duma, which will hold a session later Friday to consider it.

Under the constitutional changes approved in 2020, the lower house approves the candidacy of the prime minister, who then submits Cabinet members for approval. The changes were ostensibly meant to grant parliament broader power, but the procedure is widely seen as pro forma given Kremlin control over the body.

Most Cabinet members are expected to keep their jobs, but it was not clear if Shoigu, the defence minister, would be among them after last month's arrest of his top associate, Timur Ivanov.

Ivanov, who served as deputy defence minister in charge of massive military construction projects, was arrested on bribery charges and was ordered to stay in custody pending official investigation.

The arrest of Ivanov was widely interpreted as an attack on Shoigu and a possible precursor of his dismissal despite his close personal ties with Putin.

—AP

Cohen yet to testify in Trump's trial

NEW YORK, 10 MAY

The third week of testimony in Donald Trump's hush money trial draws to a close Friday after jurors heard the dramatic, if not downright seamy, account of adult film actor Stormy Daniels. Meanwhile, prosecutors gear up for their most crucial witness: Michael Cohen, Trump's former attorney.

Daniels' story of an alleged sexual encounter with Trump was a crucial building block for prosecutors, who are seeking to show that the Republican and his allies buried unflattering stories in the waning weeks of the 2016 presidential election in an effort to illegally influence the race.

Trump, who denies the sexual encounter ever happened, walked out of the court in a rage on Thursday, angrily telling reporters, "I'm innocent." His attorneys pushed for a mistrial over the level of tawdry details Daniels went into on the witness stand, but Judge Juan M. Merchan denied the request. In the testimony, Daniels relayed in detail what she says happened after the two met at a celebrity golf outing at Lake Tahoe where sponsors included the adult film studio where she worked. Daniels explained how she felt surprise, fear and discomfort, even as she consented to sex with Trump. During combative cross-examination, Trump's lawyers sought to paint Daniels as a liar and extortionist. *—AP*

Barron Trump *PHOTO: PTI*

Trump's son makes political debut ahead of polls

Donald Trump's son Barron Trump is to enter the political limelight with a role at July's Republican Convention. Delegates from across the US will formally select the party's nominee for president.

44 still missing days after S Africa building collapse

CAPE TOWN, 10 MAY

Hope was fading Friday for 44 construction workers buried for days in the rubble of a building that collapsed in South Africa. Authorities said rescuers are now faced with the challenge of moving thousands of tons of concrete with heavy machinery to see if there are any more survivors.

The death toll rose to nine after a worker who was in critical condition died in the hospital, authorities said.

Of the 28 workers rescued from the site, 21 were in critical condition or had life-threatening injuries following Monday's collapse of the five-story apartment complex that was under construction.

With fears that the final death toll could exceed 50, authorities in the city of George on South Africa's south coast said large earth-moving equipment had arrived and rescue teams were removing huge slabs of concrete and rubble to reach deeper into the wreckage.

City authorities said it was still a rescue rather than a recovery operation, but no survivors have been located or brought out since Wednesday.

"Despite the introduction of large machinery, rescue techniques will still be applied meticulously and sensitively by the highly skilled and experienced disaster management team," the city said in a statement.

It also revised the number of missing from 38 to 44 after determining that there were more construction workers at the site than previously thought. *—AP*

CHAD'S ARMY HEAD WINS PREZ POLL AS OPPN CRIES FOUL

N'DJAMENA, 10 MAY

Chad's military leader Mahamat Deby Itno, was declared the winner of this week's presidential election, according to provisional results released Thursday. The results were contested by his main rival, Prime Minister Succès Masra. The national agency that manages Chad's election released results of Monday's vote weeks earlier than planned. The figures showed Deby Itno won with just over 61 per cent of the vote, with the runner-up Masra falling far behind with over 18.5 per cent of the vote. Gunfire erupted in the capital following the announcement, though it was unclear if it was celebratory. *—AP*

British economy rebounds strongly ending 'recession'

LONDON, 10 MAY

The British economy bounced back strongly in the first three months of the year, bringing to an end to what economists termed a "technical recession", official figures showed Friday.

The Office for National Statistics said the economy grew by 0.6 per cent in the first quarter from the previous three-month period, with broad-based strength across the crucial services sector in particular.

The increase was higher than the 0.4 per cent predicted by economists and the strongest since the fourth quarter of 2021 when the economy was rebounding following the sharp contraction during the coronavirus pandemic.

It comes after two quarters of modest declines, which in the UK is defined as a recession.

Despite the quarterly increase, the British economy has barely grown over the past year. It has been hobbled by interest rates at 16-year highs of 5.25 per cent. There was hope Thursday that they may be on the way down soon. Bank of England Gov. Andrew Bailey indicated that a rate cut may be on the cards in June if inflation continues to trend downwards. The Bank of England, like the US Fed and other central banks around the world, raised interest rates aggressively in late 2021 from near zero to counter price rises first stoked by supply chain issues during the coronavirus pandemic and then by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. High interest rates — which cool the economy by making it more expensive to borrow — have helped ease inflation, but they've also weighed on the British economy. Economists laid out the hope that, with inflation cooling and interest rates lower, the British economy may be entering a period of more sustained growth. *—AP*

NATIONS REMAIN DIVIDED

The new 'pandemic treaty' saga

GENEVA, 10 MAY

After the coronavirus pandemic triggered once-unthinkable lockdowns, upended economies and killed millions, leaders at the World Health Organisation and worldwide vowed to do better in the future.

Years later, countries are still struggling to come up with an agreed-upon plan for how the world might respond to the next global outbreak.

A ninth and final round of talks involving governments, advocacy groups and others to finalise a "pandemic treaty" is scheduled to end Friday. The accord's aim: guidelines for how the WHO's 194 member countries might stop future pandemics and better share scarce resources.WHO's countries asked the UN health agency to oversee talks for a pandemic agreement in 2021.

Britain said it would only agree to an accord if it was firmly in the UK national interest *PHOTO: X/@ROADCHES*

Envoys have been working long hours in recent weeks to prepare a draft ahead of a self-imposed deadline later this month: ratification of the accord at WHO's annual meeting. But deep divisions could derail it. US Republican senators wrote a letter to the Biden administration last week critical of the draft for focusing on issues like "shredding intellectual property rights" and "supercharging the WHO." Many developing countries say it's unfair that they might be expected to provide virus samples to help develop vaccines and treatments, but then be unable to afford them. *—AP*

FORMER FIJI PM JAILED FOR HINDERING PROBE

SUVA, 10 MAY

Fiji's long-serving former prime minister Frank Bainimarama has been sentenced to a year in prison for obstructing a police investigation into corruption.

Bainimarama, 70, is one of the most high-profile politicians in the Pacific Islands, having led Fiji for more than15 years until he was voted out in 2022. On the international stage he was also a leading representative lobbying for climate change action for vulnerable Pacific countries.

He was taken away in handcuffs after the High Court's ruling on Thursday. Last month he was convicted of perverting the course of justice during a police investigation into university fraud. Bainimarama pleaded not guilty to the charges but a court in April found him guilty. *—BBC News*

Gold, silver prices rebound on strong domestic demand

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

Gold and silver prices rebounded sharply on Friday after falling for two straight sessions, with the yellow metal jumping Rs 950 to cross the Rs 73,000-mark in the national capital amid a bullish global trend and strong domestic demand on the Akshaya Tritiya festival.

According to HDFC Securities, the precious metal climbed by Rs 950 to Rs 73,200 per 10 grams. It had closed at Rs 72,250 per 10 grams in the previous trade.

Silver prices also surged by Rs 2,300 to Rs 85,500 per kg. In the previous close, it had ended at Rs 83,200 per kg. "Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 73,200 per 10 grams, up by Rs 950, amid a bullish trend in the overseas markets. "During the auspicious occasion of Akshaya Tritiya, retail demand is going to rise as people will buy gold coins, bars, and jewellery," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. —*PTI*

Rupee settles 1 paisa lower against US dollar

MUMBAI, 10 MAY

The rupee stayed range-bound and settled 1 paisa lower at 83.49 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, as the support from positive domestic equities was negated by elevated crude oil prices. Forex traders said significant foreign fund outflows dented investors' sentiments. At the inter-bank foreign exchange market, the local unit traded in a narrow range. It opened at 83.48, and touched an intra-day high of 83.46 and a low of 83.51 during the day. The domestic unit finally settled for the day at 83.49 (provisional), down 1 paisa from its previous close. On Thursday, the rupee closed at 83.48 against the American currency. The Indian rupee traded on a flat note. Positive domestic markets and a weak US dollar supported the rupee, however, a rise in crude oil prices and sustained foreign fund outflows capped sharp gains, said Anuj Choudhary Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. —*PTI*

Fairfax-backed Go Digit eyes ₹2,615cr via IPO

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

Go Digit General Insurance Ltd, a firm backed by Canada-based Fairfax Group, on Friday fixed a price band of Rs 258-272 per share for its Rs 2,615-crore initial public offering (IPO). The initial share-sale will open for public subscription during 15-17 May and the bidding for anchor investors will open for a day on 14 May, the company announced. Go Digit's proposed IPO comprises fresh issuance of equity shares worth Rs 1,125 crore and an Offer-for-Sale (OFS) of 5.47 crore equity shares by promoter Go Digit Infoworks Services and existing shareholders worth Rs 1,490 crore. This takes the total IPO size to Rs 2,615 crore at the upper end of the price band. —*PTI*

Bank of Baroda profit rises by 2.3%

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

IState-owned Bank of Baroda (BoB) on Friday posted a marginal 2.3 per cent rise in net profit at Rs 4,886 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2024. The bank had earned a net profit of Rs 4,775 crore in the January-March quarter a year ago. The total income increased to Rs 33,775 crore during the quarter under review, as against Rs 29,323 crore in the same period last year, BoB said in a regulatory filing. Interest income grew to Rs 29,583 crore during the latest three-month period from Rs 25,857 crore in the corresponding quarter a year ago. On the asset quality side, the bank's gross Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) moderated to 2.92 per cent of gross advances as of March 31, 2024, from 3.79 per cent at the end of March 2023. Net NPAs also declined to 0.68 per cent of the advances, from 0.89 per cent at the end of 2023. —*PTI*

Scorching heatwaves to affect country's economy

While crops & livestock are hit, heat stress could also affect jobs

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

The scorching summer temperatures sweeping across India this year, with an average of 40 degrees Celsius, are not only taking a toll on farmers but are also poised to have a substantial impact on the overall economy.

While some eastern cities have been spared, many parts of the country are experiencing severe heatwaves, prompting people to avoid going out during the hottest hours of the day.

Although this is not a cropping season, the impact of the heatwave is being felt on seasonal and perennial crops like vegetables as well as livestock.

The severity of heatwaves is escalating every year, raising concerns about a looming climate crisis. Regulators and financial institutions have been emphasizing the detrimental effects of heatwave on the economy.

In May last year, the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Department of Economic and Policy Research had warned that climate change, driven by rising temperatures and shifting monsoon patterns will have a significant impact on the economy.

RBI mentioned, "India, along with countries such as Brazil and Mexico, face high risk of reduction in economic growth, if global warming raises the temperature by 2 degree Celsius as against 1.5 degree Celsius (IPCC, 2018). Climate change manifested through rising temperature and changing patterns of monsoon rainfall in India could cost the economy 2.8 per cent of its GDP and depress the living standards of nearly half of its population by 2050."

The report also highlighted the risk of substantial job losses due to excessive heatwaves

PHOTO: PTI

The report also highlighted the risk of substantial job losses due to excessive heatwaves.

"India could account for 34 million of the projected 80 million global job losses from heat stress associated productivity decline by 2030 (World Bank, 2022). Further, up to 4.5 per cent of India's GDP could be at risk by 2030 owing to lost labour hours from extreme heat and humidity conditions", stated RBI.

Moreover, the Bank of Baroda's economic research report underscored how heatwave conditions are affecting food production in India. Despite a predicted normal monsoon by the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), concerns remain about inflation, especially in vegetable prices.

In India, there has been a surge in demand for air conditioners, air coolers, and refrigerators. Dealers say sales are expected to go up by 30-40 percent this year, with many products already out of stock in several areas.

To mitigate the effects of the heatwave, many states and municipal bodies have issued guidelines advising people to stay indoors during the hottest part of the day and remain hydrated. —*ANI*

NIFTY RISES BY 0.44%

Markets bounce back as sectoral indices gain

MUMBAI, 10 MAY

Indian stock markets experienced a slight gain during Friday's session following a slump in stock indices on Thursday.

The Nifty 50 index rose by 0.44 percent to close at 22,055, while the Sensex gained 260.3 points to close at 72,664.47. With the exception of the IT, Realty, PSU Bank, and Bank sectors, all other sectoral indices recorded gains.

The Metal, Oil & Gas, FMCG, and Auto sectors led the upward trend. In the Nifty 50 list, BPCL, Power Grid, NTPC, Hero Motocorp, and Eicher Motors emerged as the top gainers, while TCS, Cipla, LTIM, Kotak Bank, and Infosys were among the top losers. According to market statistics from the NSE, a total of 2,703 stocks traded on the exchange, with 1,660 closing in the green, 926 declining, and 117 remaining unchanged.

"Indian markets largely remained positive; however, a trend of sell-on rally is emerging given domestic premium valuation and election jitters creeping in the minds of investors given lower voter turnout." said Vinod Nair, head of research at Geojit Financial Services

PHOTO: PTI

He further added, "Financials remained weak on account of signs of contraction in NIMs and the RBI's regulatory actions. FIIs continue to remain sellers given delays in rate cuts, inflationary concerns, moderation in corporate earnings, and premium valuation. Apart from US consumer and inflation data, the possibility of US tariff actions on Chinese EV companies will attract market attention."

The broader market indices closed in the green during Friday's session, with Nifty Midcap 50 and Nifty Midcap Select emerging as notable gainers after gaining more than 1 percent. Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have turned net sellers in Indian stocks lately, with NSDL data showing cumulative sales worth Rs 8,671 crore in April and Rs 10,413 crore so far in May. —*ANI*

EYEING GROWTH

Wipro Hydraulics to acquire Canada's Mailhot Industries

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

Homegrown Wipro Hydraulics has signed an agreement to acquire the assets of Canada-based Mailhot Industries.

Wipro Hydraulics is the hydraulics business of Wipro Infrastructure Engineering.

"Wipro Hydraulics has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire Mailhot Industries... subject to customary closing conditions, including regulatory approvals," Wipro Infrastructure Engineering said in a statement.

The company did not disclose any financial details related to the planned deal.

Mailhot Industries is a North American leader in hydraulic cylinder manufacturing and specialises in refuse trucks and snow removal equipment market, the statement said, adding that the acquisition also includes JARP Industries, a part of Mailhot Industries.

The company did not disclose any financial details related to the planned deal

PHOTO: PTI

Pratik Kumar, Wipro Infrastructure Engineering (WIN) CEO and Wipro Enterprises Managing Director, said, "This acquisition marks a pivotal moment for us, further bolstering our market position by integrating new technologies and expanding our global footprint. This strategic move will complement our capabilities and strengthen our leadership position in the North American market." —*PTI*

India to be third largest consumer market: Report

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

India is set to solidify its position as a global economic powerhouse as it gears up to become the world's third-largest consumer market by 2026, according to the 'India Economic Perspectives' report by UBS.

Despite facing challenges, the country's consumer market has shown remarkable resilence and growth over the past decade.

According to the report, India is expected to outpace Germany by 2024 and Japan by 2026, solidifying its position as a global economic powerhouse. The country's rapid ascent is driven by several key factors, including its large population and rising middle class.

In 2023, India's household consumption surged to USD 2.1 trillion, nearly doubling from the previous decade, with an annual compound growth rate of 7.2 per cent.

This growth rate surpasses that of major economies like China, the US, and Germany. The impressive growth trajectory positions India as one of the fastest-growing economies and the fifth-largest consumer market globally.

The projections indicate that India will surpass Germany and Japan to become the world's third-largest consumer market by 2026. This forecast comes as India's consumer market continues to exhibit robust growth and expansion.

A key driver of this growth is the emerging wealthy segment in India. Euromonitor data reveals that in 2023, around 40 million individuals, constituting 4 per cent of the population aged 15 years and above, belonged to the affluent category, with an annual income exceeding USD10,000.

Projections indicate that this figure is set to more than double over the next five years, indicating a significant expansion of purchasing power among the Indian populace. —*ANI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

TESLA TO EXPAND SUPERCHARGER NETWORK

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

In a recent announcement, Tesla CEO Elon Musk took to X to reaffirm the company's commitment to expanding its Supercharger network.

Musk's post stated, "Just to reiterate: Tesla will spend well over USD 500M expanding our Supercharger network to create thousands of NEW chargers this year. That's just on new sites and expansions, not counting operations costs, which are much higher."

The statement underscores Tesla's ongoing efforts to bolster its infrastructure to support the growing demand for electric vehicles (EVs).

With the rise in electric vehicle adoption globally, the need for reliable charging infrastructure has become increasingly paramount.

Tesla's Supercharger network is renowned for its efficiency and speed, offering Tesla owners a convenient way to recharge their vehicles during long-distance travel.

The company has been steadily expanding its network to ensure widespread coverage and accessibility for its customers.

The planned investment indicates a significant commitment from Tesla to scale up its charging infrastructure rapidly. The funds will be allocated towards the deployment of thousands of new chargers across various locations. —*ANI*

17 firms under IT scheme to start production this yr

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

Majority of personal computer and server makers selected under the IT hardware production-linked incentive scheme are expected to start production this year, a senior government official said on Friday. Among the big names that have been granted approval under the IT hardware scheme are Flextronics, VVDN, and Optiemus. Other applicants that have received the green signal include Padget Electronics, SOJO Manufacturing Services,

PHOTO: PTI

Goodworth, Neolync, Syrma SGS, Mega Networks, Panache Digilife, and ITI Ltd, among others.On the Rs 10,372-crore India AI mission, Krishnan said domestic companies will get preference. —*PTI*

Forex reserves jump to $641.59 B

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

After three consecutive weeks of drop, India's forex reserves increased by USD 3.668 billion to USD 641.59 billion for the week ended 3 May, the RBI said on Friday.

The overall kitty dropped USD 2.412 billion to USD 637.922 billion for the previous week ended April 26.

For the week ended 5 April, the reserves had hit an all-time high of USD 648.562 billion, following multiple weeks of increases after breaching the previous high of September 2021 in March this year.

For the week ended 3 May, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by USD 4.459 billion to USD 564.161 billion, the data released on Friday showed.

PHOTO: ANI

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves decreased by USD 653 million to USD 54.88 billion during the week, the Reserve Bank of India said.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up USD 2 million to USD 18.051 billion, the apex bank said.

India's reserve position with the IMF was down by USD 140 million to USD 4.499 billion in the reporting week, the data showed. —*ANI*

After backlash, Apple sorry for its piano crushing ad

CALIFORNIA, 10 MAY

Apple has apologised after a backlash over an advert that showed objects, including musical instruments and books, being crushed by a hydraulic press.

Apple said the advert fell short of its goal of empowering and celebrating creatives, in a statement released to marketing publication Ad Age.

The video was meant to demonstrate how creativity has been compressed into the latest iPad. But celebrities including Hugh Grant and Justine Bateman reacted with horror to the destruction shown in the advert.

"Our goal is to always celebrate the myriad of ways users express themselves and bring their ideas to life through iPad. We missed the mark with this video, and we're sorry," Tor Myhren, Apple's VP of marketing communications said.Apple boss Tim Cook has been called tone deaf for his post on X, about the device, where he asked people to "imagine all the things it'll be used to create".

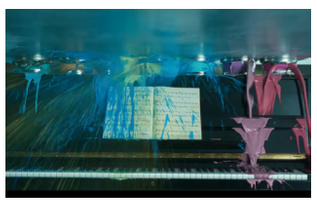


PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

The advert attempts to show what Apple's latest tablet is capable of, such as watching television programmes, listening to music and playing video games, while making the point that the new device is particularly thin.It does this by using a video theme that has been around for almost a decade of musical instruments being crushed. —*BBC News*

PLUMMETING PRICES

ITA seeks aid for Darjeeling tea industry

KOLKATA, 10 MAY

The Indian Tea Association (ITA) on Friday reiterated its plea for financial assistance from the Centre to support the struggling Darjeeling tea industry.

According to the ITA, the situation in Darjeeling is critical due to decreasing yields and plummeting prices.

Without a financial relief package, the survival of the Darjeeling tea industry is in jeopardy, the association said, adding that it has urged the government to consider and act upon a financial revival package endorsed by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce in March 2022. "The association has urged the government to extend a financial revival package to the Darjeeling tea sector which has been already endorsed by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on commerce in March 2022. This awaits consideration and action", the ITA said.

According to the Indian Tea Association, the situation in Darjeeling is critical due to decreasing yields

PHOTO: PTI

The ITA, quoting Tea Board data, highlighted that adverse weather conditions have affected tea production in Assam and West Bengal, leading to a significant decrease in production. From January to March 2024, production was down by 13.69 million kg at 96.10 million kg across the country, according to Tea Board data. Prices at the auctions have also taken a beating during the same period, the ITA said, adding that at an all-India level, auction prices were down by Rs 16.08 per kg at Rs 128.12. Meanwhile, tea exports from India during January to December 2023 fell to 227.91 million kg as compared to 231.08 million kg in the same period of 2022, adding to the industry's challenges, the ITA said. —*PTI*

PHOTO: SALAR

Virat Kohli should open in T20 WC: Ganguly

BENGALURU, 10 MAY

Pormer Indian captain Sourav Ganguly on Friday said the Indian team management should make Virat Kohli open in next month's T20 World Cup to exploit the star batter's rich vein of form in the ongoing Indian Premier League. Kohli is the current Orange Cap holder in this IPL with 634 runs from 12 matches, averaging 70.44 and at an impressive strike rate of 153.51, which is significantly higher than his career rate of 134.31. "Virat is playing exceptionally well. The way Kohli batted last night – 90 in quick time, you need to use him as an opener in the T20 World Cup. He should open, evidenced by his last few IPL innings which have been outstanding," Ganguly told PTI here on the sidelines of a promotional event. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

India athletes will get sports-specific help: PT Usha

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

IOA president PT Usha on Friday assured Olympic-bound athletes of the best possible assistance in Paris, saying sports-specific support staff would be housed closer to the Games Village to provide help without wasting time. Usha, who returned to India after finalizing the arrangements for Indian athletes and support staff in Paris, said the IOA had also ensured that shooters and golfers stayed closer to their respective event venues. The Chateauroux Shooting Centre is about two hours outside Paris, while the Le Golf National is an hour's drive from the Olympic hub. *—PTI*

Rybakina withdraws from Italian Open

LONDON, 9 MAY

Defending champion Elena Rybakina has withdrawn from the Italian Open due to illness, the tournament said on Friday. The Wimbledon 2022 champion's withdrawal was announced hours before she was scheduled to begin her title defense against Romania's Irina-Camelia Begu. Kazakhstan's Rybakina would be replaced by Frenchwoman Oceane Dodin, the tournament said in a post on X. "We wish our 2023 champion a speedy recovery," they added. World number four Rybakina is scheduled to play in the French Open later this month. *—AP*

Need to improve fitness and tactics: Manika Batra

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

Manika Batra could not be more thrilled about bossing the World No.2 from China earlier this week but to beat the top-10 players more often, the Indian table tennis trailblazer knows she needs to do more on the tactical and fitness front. After becoming the first Indian female to reach the quarterfinals of a Grand Smash (top-tier event organized by World Table Tennis), the 28-year-old doesn't want to sit on her laurels and her focus is firmly fixed on the Paris Olympics in July-August. Before blanking 14th-ranked Nina Mittelham from Germany to make it a special week in Saudi Arabia. *—PTI*

KKR target playoff berth at home

Mumbai Indians seek to salvage pride

KOLKATA, 10 MAY

In red-hot form, two-time former champions Kolkata Knight Riders will look to seal an IPL playoff berth for the first time in three years when they take on the struggling Mumbai Indians in their final home match of the season, here on Saturday.

The return of their two-time title-winning skipper Gautam Gambhir as team mentor has done wonders for the side which has found ways to win games from difficult situations this season.

Sitting at the top of the 10-team standings with eight wins from 11 matches, another win will guarantee them the playoff berth as the Shah Rukh Khan-owned franchise will look to end on a high, its campaign at the home venue of Eden Gardens.

Gambhir's ploy to back Sunil Narine as an opener along with World No.2 T20I batter Phil Salt has been a masterstroke. The duo has scored the bulk of the team's runs, giving it the perfect platform in power-plays to post six 200-plus totals from eight matches batting first.

With 32 sixes to his name, Narine is also the second in the list behind Abhishek Sharma (35).

The consistency with which Narine keeps churning out high scores match after the match has been phenomenal.

PHOTO: PTI

With one century and three fifties, the Trinidadian has also been their leading run-getter, amassing 461 runs at a strike rate of 183.66. Englishman Salt has scored 429 runs at a strike rate of 183.33. The duo's explosive form has also meant that the likes of Andre Russell and demolished Lucknow Super Giants the other day.

Coming on the back of a morale-boosting win over SRH, MI will look to salvage some pride.

Fresh from his knocks of 56 and 102 not out, Suryakumar Yadav has been in scintillating form which augurs well for Team India ahead of the T20 World Cup in less than a month. At the same time, Team India fans will hope that Rohit Sharma and Hardik Pandya also return among runs. The India captain has four single-digit scores and one 11 in the last five games, while Pandya's best this season has been 46. The struggling all-rounder has failed to cross 10 in his last six innings. *—PTI*

TODAY'S MATCH

Time: 7:30 PM

Where To Watch:

Jio Cinema, Star Sports Network

Stadium: Eden Gardens Stadium in Kolkata

CHESS : GUKESH STORMS BACK

Praggnanandhaa moves to joint third, Carlsen takes lead

WARSAW, 10 MAY

World Championship challenger D Gukesh bounced back from a sedate start to defeat compatriot R Praggnanandhaa and Germany's Vincent Keymer before holding world No. 1 Magnus Carlsen after round six of the Superbet rapid and blitz tournament here on Friday.

However, Praggnanandhaa produced a strong fifth round, defeating Holland's Anish Giri and he followed it with a win over Keymer in the sixth round.

Norway's Carlsen shares the lead with Wei Yi of China with eight points apiece while Praggnanandhaaa and Shevchenko share the third spot with seven points each.

Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan, Gukesh, and Arjun Erigaisi are joint fifth on 6 points, a full point ahead of local star Duda Jan-Kryzstof.

With four points, Keymer is in ninth spot in the $175000 prize money tournament, a point clear of Giri.

However, the dream run of Romanian Kirill Shevchenko was ended by Erigaisi, who scored his first victory in the event.

Starting with losses in the first two rounds followed by a lone draw, Gukesh showed pluck to prevail over Praggnanandhaaa in the fourth round in 41 moves.

The middle game arising out of a double fianchetto by whites did not offer much scope for Gukesh. His position worsened as Praggnanandhaaa launched a King-side attack by advancing his pawns.

The pressure was immense on both and despite getting close to a winning position Praggnanandhaaa could not keep his nerves and let Gukesh come back strongly.

In the next round, Praggnanandhaa was on target with some difficult moves to grind down Giri in just 21 moves out of an irregular Queen pawn game. *—PTI*

D Gukesh PHOTO: PTI

Chess training may look cheap but it's expensive: Pragg

WARSAW, 10 MAY

Young Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa on Friday called for robust financial backing for chess, debunking the common concept that players require minimal monetary support to train and excel in the sport. Praggnanandhaa recently competed in the FIDE Candidates in Toronto for the first time. He is currently participating in the Rapid and Blitz Poland, a part of the Grand Chess Tour. "Chess training may look easy and cheap but it's a very expensive sport due to all the travel and paraphernalia. That's why I am grateful for the support (from Adani Group). *—PTI*

R Praggnanandhaa PHOTO: PTI

Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia PHOTO: PTI

It is a big victory for women wrestlers: Sakshi

NEW DELHI, 10 MAY

Star grapplers Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia on Friday welcomed the Delhi court's decision to frame sexual harassment charges against former WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, calling it a big victory for the country's women wrestlers.

A Delhi court on Friday ordered the framing of sexual harassment and other charges against Singh, a multiple-term Lok Sabha MP, under sections 354 (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty), 354A (sexual harassment), and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the IPC."

This is a big victory for the struggle of women wrestlers," Tokyo Olympic bronze medallist Bajrang, one of the leading faces in the protest against Singh, wrote on 'X'."

The daughters of the country have had to go through such difficult times, but this decision will provide relief.

Those who trolled women wrestlers should also be ashamed. Satyamev Jayate."

Rio Olympic bronze medallist Malik had retired after a faction led by Sanjay Singh, an aide of the former WFI President, was elected to head the federation in December last year."...We thank the honorable court. We had to sleep on the streets for many nights in the heat and rain, had to give up on our stable careers, only then have we been able to take a few steps forward in the fight for justice," Malik, one of the leading faces in the protest against Singh, wrote on 'X'."

Heartfelt gratitude to those who showered love and blessings and may God bless those who trolled and said bad things. Long live Mother India."The court will formally frame the charges on 21 May. *—PTI*

HEAD COACH

Dravid will have to reapply: Jay Shah

MUMBAI, 10 MAY

India head coach Rahul Dravid will have to reapply if he wishes to continue in the job after his tenure ends with next month's T20 World Cup, BCCI Secretary Jay Shah has said while making it clear that the new appointment will be for a three-year term.Dravid, who had a two-year contract originally, was given an extension along with his support staff after the conclusion of the 50-overs World Cup in November last year."

We will call for applications in the next few days. Rahul Dravid's tenure is coming to an end. He has to reapply if he has to continue. We are looking for a long-term coach, for three years," Shah told select media during an interaction at the BCCI office here on Thursday.The BCCI secretary said there has been no precedent of having different coaches for different formats but ultimately the decision rests with the Cricket Advisory Committee. There are many common players across formats such as Rishabh Pant, Virat Kohli, and Rohit Sharma," he said."Ultimately, this is the Cricket Advisory Committee's call. I have to implement what they decide," he added.Shah said even a foreign coach can be considered depending on the CAC's recommendations."If the CAC selects a foreign coach, I can't interfere," he added. The BCCI secretary informed that the vacant post of one national selector is expected to be filled up soon."A few interviews for the selector's post have already happened. We will announce it soon," he said. Greg Barclay's role as the chairman of the International Cricket Council ends later this year but Shah remained non-committal on running for the position."Let me be here in BCCI. *—PTI*

Rahul Dravid and Jay Shah PHOTO: PTI

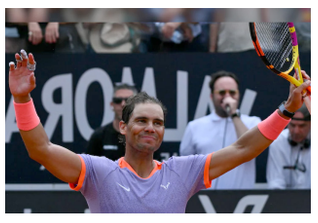
BANGLADESH WINS BY 5 RUNS

MIRPUR, 10 MAY

Zimbabwe again got close to Bangladesh's total but couldn't quite get the job done. This time in Dhaka, Bangladesh beat them by five runs to extend their lead in the T20I series to 4-0. With big hits towards the end, tailenders Wellington Masakadza and Blessing Muzarabani got everyone excited and nervous - depending on which side you were supporting.

Then Shakib Al Hasan took the two remaining wickets in the last over, but not before Muzarabani struck him for a straight six when 13 runs were needed. Shakib finished with 4 for 35 in his first T20I in ten months. Mustafizur Rahman, also returning to the side, took three wickets, while Taskin Ahmed took two and Rishad Hossain one. Bangladesh 143 (Tanzid 52, Soumya 41, Jongwe 3-20) beat Zimbabwe 138 (Campbell 31, Shakib 4-35, Mustafizur 3-19) by five runs. *—PTI*

NADAL WANTS TO LOSE FEAR FACTOR AFTER WINNING ROME OPENER



Rafael Nadal PHOTO: PTI

SYLHET, 9 MAY

Rafael Nadal said that he can no longer afford to fear injury after battling into the second round of the Rome Open on Thursday, with Roland Garros looming on the horizon. Clay court icon Nadal bounced back from a set down to beat qualifier Zizou Bergs 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 in the Italian capital with a gritty performance that will need to be improved upon when the Spaniard faces his next opponent, world number nine Hubert Hurkacz.

Should he progress further Nadal also has last year's winner, world number four Daniil Medvedev, and the beaten finalist Holger Rune on his side of the draw.

The 37-year-old took nearly three hours to see off Belgian Bergs as he continued his comeback and bid to play at Roland Garros, most likely for the last time. Nadal has in recent times been a shadow of the player who has won 22 Grand Slams in a storied career which has also brought a record 10 titles in Rome. *—AP*

EUROPA LEAGUE FINAL

Leverkusen rallies late in draw with Roma

LEVERKUSEN, 10 MAY

Bayer Leverkusen had a double reason to celebrate in stoppage time on Thursday.

Not only did it reach the Europa League final and keep its treble bid on course but substitute Josip Stanišic's late goal preserved its remarkable unbeaten record as Leverkusen rescued a 2-2 draw against Roma.

Both had seemed at risk during the semifinal second leg after two Leandro Paredes penalties had made it 2-0 on the night and 2-2 on aggregate. But an own goal by Roma defender Gianluca Mancini eight minutes from time and Stanišic's equalizer saw Leverkusen stretch its unbeaten streak to 49 matches.

Leverkusen advanced 4-2 on aggregate and will face another Italian team on 22 May in Dublin after Atalanta beat Marseille 3-0 to advance 4-1 on aggregate. "It's pure goosebumps!" Granit Xhaka told German television RTL. "You dream of an atmosphere like this. You dream of games like this. As a kid, you want to be in these games and then when you equalize just before the end and get to the final, it's incredible." The fact that its unbeaten record was preserved about 30 seconds away from coming to an end was another improbable finale in an impressive season for Xabi Alonso's team, which has already won the Bundesliga title and also reached the German Cup final. Leverkusen's equalizer was its 17th goal of the season in the 90th minute or later across all competitions and the third time it has come back from 2-0 down in the second half of Europa League knockout matches. *—AP*

Leverkusen's players celebrate at the end of the Europa League second leg semi-final soccer match between Leverkusen and Roma at the BayArena in Germany. The final will be held in Athens on 29 May PHOTO: AFP

- Leverkusen advanced 4-2 on aggregate and will face another Italian team on 22 May in Dublin after Atalanta beat Marseille 3-0 to advance 4-1 on aggregate.

Italy and Germany to have 5 clubs in 2024-25

DUBAI, 10 MAY

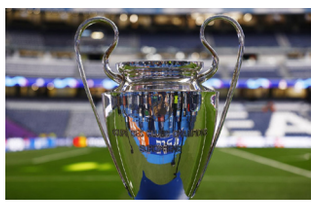


PHOTO: AFP

Italy and Germany have earned an extra spot in the Champions League next season after their clubs performed well in European competitions this season, Europe's soccer governing body UEFA said on Friday. With the Champions League expanding to 36 teams next season, UEFA said two of the four additional places would be filled by European Performance Spots which go to associations "with the best collective performance by their clubs" in UEFA competitions.

After the semifinal legs of the Champions League, Europa League, and Europa Conference League concluded this week, UEFA said Italy and Germany are guaranteed to finish in the top two of the 2023-24 association club coefficients.

As things stand, Borussia Dortmund are outside the top four in the Bundesliga but will qualify in fifth place.

The team is also in the Champions League final where it will play Real Madrid and should it beat the Spanish giants, it would qualify as winners anyway.

Its German rival and Bundesliga champion Bayer Leverkusen are in the Europa League final where it will face Italian side Atalanta, which currently holds on to fifth place in Serie A with a game in hand. *—AP*